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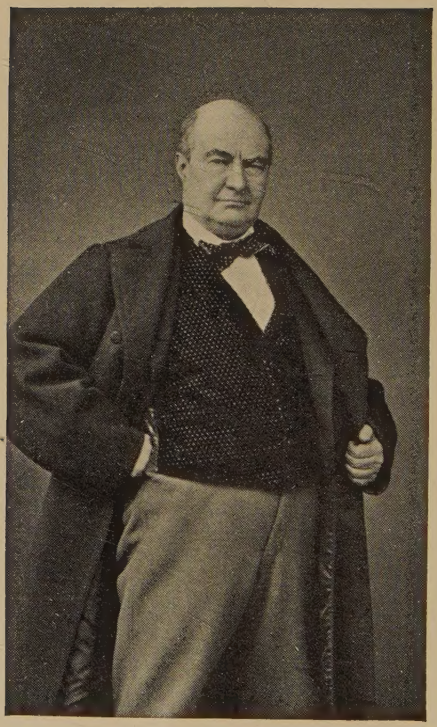

SAINTE-BEUVE

CHARLES-AUGUSTIN SAINTE-BEUVE

BY

GEORGE McLEAN HARPER

Professor of English Literature in Princeton University

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Masters of French Literature

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PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON

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Published April, 1909

Electrotyped and printed by J. B. Lippincott Company
The Washington Square Press, Philadelphia, U. S. A.

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PREFACE

WHATEVER the merits or the faults of this book, it has the advantage of being the first one in the English language devoted to the life and works of Sainte-Beuve. Criticism is not so highly honoured in English-speaking countries as in France, and it has perhaps been taken for granted that to criticise a critic would be carrying the thing too far. For of course to write a man's life is to criticise him. Yet Sainte-Beuve was a pervading force in the intellectual history of his time. His influence was European. It has become world-wide. And if, as is not improbable, the nineteenth century should appear more and more a century of critical thought, a period of preparation for a new synthesis, the attention of mankind will be drawn still further to the figure of Sainte-Beuve. The last six or seven years have seen a revival of interest in his life, giving birth to a bewildering profusion of articles about him in the French reviews. Portions of his correspondence are constantly appearing, and the indefatigable M. Léon Séché threatens to surprise us from day to day with fresh revelations.

The first chapter is intended to serve as an introduction and a eulogy. The others, while handled topically, are chronological, each of them covering a more or less definite number of years.

I take pleasure in acknowledging my indebtedness to M. Gustave Michaut, of the Sorbonne, whose large and profound work, *Sainte-Beuve avant les Lundis*, has not only helped me in detail but served as an example of disinterested zeal. I have imagined M. Michaut correcting my conjectures, out of his vast store of exact knowledge, and the thought has been a spur to industry. If I have felt obliged to disagree with him in regard to his main contention—that Sainte-Beuve established a method of criticism—the reason probably lies in an incorrigible difference of race.

GEORGE MCLEAN HARPER.

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, January 25, 1909.

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CHARLES-AUGUSTIN SAINTE-BEUVE

CHAPTER I

HIS RELATION TO THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Sainte-Beuve is the most serviceable literary critic France has known. He is a sympathetic interpreter of her classics; he has revived the memory of a multitude of her minor authors; he has painted a gallery of the French worthies who have been connected even remotely with letters. No systematic account of French literature is so fresh and vital as his detached essays. No theoretical treatise on the subject is so reasonable or really so constructive as the shifting play of his intelligence. For scope and appreciation, combined with minute knowledge of detail, neither the modern nor the ancient world affords an instance of a comparable talent in the field of criticism. To the foreigner, hoping to catch something of the spirit of French thought and desirous of guidance among the perplexing values of an old and rich accumulation, Sainte-Beuve opens the

doors and shows the main paths and the retired alleys, as in a luxuriant garden. With accomplished French readers, trained to distinguish fainter fragrance and to savour more intimate delights, he walks before, an eager host, showing what will cause their steps to linger with most pleased surprise. He never fails to stimulate, because his mind, both in its rational and in its emotional activity, is quickened in a different way by every new topic to which he turns. We have not here a man moulding each fresh handful of material in his own image, turning all kinds of light to his particular shade, rearranging history according to the formula of his personal equation; and, partly for this reason, we have a man who never stales, whose interest in facts never wears out, who learns, and who becomes a different person in every connection he forms with an original spirit expressed in a book or speech or deed. Even *ennui* and disillusion are to him sources of vigour, in that they present life to him in a colour of their own, and therefore to be investigated afresh, just as an astronomer brings out his photographic apparatus on the approach of an eclipse.

Because humanity delighted him, puzzled him, and awoke an endless variety of reactions in him, Sainte-Beuve was a curious student of eccentricity. Abnormal greatness, or, rather,

original modes of greatness, solicited his analytic skill. Aberrations, inconsistencies, obscure volitional diseases, unaccountable accesses of genius, obliterated footprints, covered sins, perverted tastes, unconscious motives, draped instincts, concealed relationships, unacknowledged debts: these were a challenge to his subtlety. Fibre from fibre he could dissect a mystery in human character, and he did so with all the more zest when the skin looked healthy though the hidden tissues had suffered some strange lesion. Literature being—in spite of an almost universal effort to make it otherwise—a tell-tale and a trap for authors, he had abundant opportunity to gratify an appetite which lay deeper in his nature than the love of musical verse or picturesque phrase. He thus became aware of the vitality and variety which reward close intimacy with the concrete. The infiniteness of nature—if in any line of observation we do not perceive that, then are we not at work in the right way. And the sum of any great body of phenomena, a sum which may indeed disclose a normal type, a law, a criterion of sanity, is, at least where human character and conduct enter, a collection of peculiarities. Accident, freak, caprice, monstrosity, are what we discover in the concrete, instead of the recurrence of those

typical forms which we complacently presuppose. Sainte-Beuve followed his inquisitive instinct with increasing detachment from theories. He held to no system of æsthetics. As compared with critics who imagine types instead of seeing individuals, critics like Nisard and Brunetière, and in comparison with Taine, who trusts in the foreordination of the *milieu* to produce uniformity of character, Sainte-Beuve enjoys the immense advantage of dealing primarily with facts rather than abstractions. And he lets the facts speak for themselves. He has the supreme art of self-effacement. To read him on one of his author-subjects is to listen, not to a monologue, but to a dialogue. It is like being taken to call on a celebrated person by some common friend who has a gift for making him expand and talk at ease. He provokes the great man to expression, leads him along the lines of strongest interest, asks his advice, often very cunningly, on subjects that concern us, and arouses the majestic beast until it throws aside the robe of dignity in which lions often wrap themselves, and lashes its tail and roars or calmly chews cud according as it is a real lion or a sheep in lion's hide. Meanwhile our introducer keeps in the background, and casts towards us, now and then, a glance of satisfaction.

Following close upon the heels of this inquisitive instinct ran another faculty of Sainte-Beuve, directing the former in its ferreting—his exquisite enjoyment of literary art. He was much more than a mere analyst; his nature was rich in passiveness. It is on depths of still capacity, which can receive and receive and give no sign, that the flower of refined taste blooms at last. So convinced was Sainte-Beuve that much reading throughout long time must precede the unfolding of literary tact, that he traces with proud piety the existence of a taste for books in his father, who died before he was born:

> "If, born in his very death,
> My memory his image never took,
> His mind and heart and taste he did bequeath,
> Circling with notes the page of many a book."

Human nature may be infinitely diverse, and yet the forms of art are few, and pleasure is given by means known to the poets from Homer down. In a sense, art is superhuman. Certain ideals of beauty, within the limits of our western civilisation, appear to be immutable. Metre, and even particular metrical arrangements, rhyme, alliteration, certain conventional ways of telling a story, the rising and falling action of drama, probably awaken much the same sensations now that they did whenever they were used ages ago. Further-

more, a continuous tradition has been maintained—knowledge of the past, of experiments that have failed or succeeded, of examples that have proved fruitful, of theories that have been tested. Sainte-Beuve possessed a delicate taste for beautiful work and a strong respect for the traditions which have fostered it. Here is the universal and abiding element of his talent. He has a sense for the classical, balancing and employing his restless instinct for individuality. In this respect it may be said that two schools of art and indeed two centuries so widely separated as the seventeenth and the nineteenth find in him their representative. He entertained for the long-tried opinions and generally approved judgments of competent predecessors an almost reverent respect. If Du Bellay relished a verse and Boileau gave it his sanction; if Pascal found cogency in an argument and Vauvenargues also felt its force; if a phrase or an idea had been current among men of excellent wit in an accomplished epoch, such authority spoke strongly to Sainte-Beuve. He was practical enough to perceive the advantage of classicism as consecrating a stable body of accepted opinions. He appreciated the simplicity and the general sufficiency of these standards in the case of French literature. In

spite of his sceptical habit, in spite of his distrust of theory and doctrine, he too, like Bossuet, whom he deeply respected, was ever seeking eternal law under the discordant contradictions of human history. In this search he was continually baffled. His intellectual career, the course of his opinions on art and life, is, until near the end, a record of enthusiasms deceived, positions surrendered, ground lost, a slowly shifting and contracting circle of pleasures, hopes, and beliefs. There was a certain residuum at the close of his days; what it was, and of how much value, we shall be interested to ask later.

Some men come to the period of their public influence with formed habits, tastes, and principles, with a set of opinions, even, and preserve all these fairly intact amid the vicissitudes of experience down to old age. We are impressed with the integrity of such lives; their harmony within themselves strikes our imagination; their outward effect is often very marked. We forget the distinction between the active and the speculative virtues, and are inclined to honour as constancy and steadfastness qualities of mind to which these terms are not really applicable. Of pure intelligence, composed, as it must be, of observation and reflection, it is, indeed, absurd to ask that it should be brave

or humble or loyal. To praise fixity of taste, rigidity of judgment, steadiness of imagination, consistency of opinion, is as if one should demand affectionate demonstrations in algebra or chaste experiments in chemistry. There are, of course, points where the will, operating as the organ of a man's moral being, comes into most intimate relations with taste, judgment, and opinion; but its only valuable service in this connection consists in keeping the mind open and repelling the interference of passion. Unless one admits the truth of this remark, one will be continually at a loss in studying the life of Sainte-Beuve. It is often said that he had the chameleon's facility of change, and that his own personality, a colourless personality we are sometimes told, took on in turn the shades of opinion prevalent at different stages of his career. Though this idea is closely associated with a just perception of his open-mindedness, it is yet, in its implication, thoroughly unfair to him. It has become a commonplace to say that he mirrored the intellectual life of France for forty years, or at least so much of the intellectual life of France as expressed itself in letters. A brief preliminary examination of this statement will show in how far it is true, and also how much passion and self-expenditure were involved.

From the opening of the century well into the third decade, one group of aspirations, one general though vague tendency of emotion and possibly of thought, found a voice in Chateaubriand. He was by birth and breeding opposed to the principles of the Revolution. His instincts were aristocratic. He encouraged a Catholic reaction. At the same time, however, he employed the resources of his musical phrase, his richly coloured vocabulary, his fancy, his eloquence, his pathos, to render attractive what is, alas! always too powerful, the self-admiration which dissolves faith and loyalty and every other virtue. As historian, moralist, and describer of nature he was hollow and vain. The ideal which he set before the eyes of French youth was an effeminate figure, sick of self-love, to whom impersonal issues, such as national recovery, Catholicism, and the claims of aristocracy, were completely indifferent. Chateaubriand took pains to identify himself, whenever a flattering opportunity offered, with his chief literary creation, the character of René. The sentimentalism which in France was the analogue of Wertherism in Germany and Byronism throughout Europe came to be called "the disease of René", and was defined by Sainte-Beuve as "disgust with life, inaction, the abuse of reverie, a proud

sense of isolation, of being misunderstood, of despising the world and its beaten paths, of judging them unworthy of one's self, of considering one's self the most afflicted of men, and at the same time loving one's sadness". And Sainte-Beuve wrote thus from experience, for he had been sore stricken with the malady himself.

A phase of this disease affected the later Romanticism of the "Cénacle", the group of young poets who surrounded Hugo. Sainte-Beuve in his youth, affected by the air he breathed and by his personal relations with Hugo, and having to print, in all haste and with the scant leisure of a hurried reviewer, the thoughts suggested by books which were saturated with Chateaubriand's influence or with the influence of the Cénacle, was naturally drawn into what he called his "campaign of Romanticism". It was during this campaign and a brief subsequent period when the sound of its battles was becoming faint in his ears that he wrote his novel, *Volupté*, and nearly all his poetry. Thereafter his work was moral history and literary criticism, which were, in his hands, one and the same. And although he never again allowed himself to be enclosed within the walls of any camp or enrolled in any army, he did undertake various cam-

paigns, but more in the spirit of a reporter than of a combatant. Many of his contemporaries and some of his biographers have inferred from his sharing the enthusiasms of the Romantics for about ten years that he entered upon the other campaigns with equal earnestness, and have grieved over his supposed defections. The truth appears to be that he was intimate enough with the writers of his time, from 1826 till his death, and susceptible enough, to understand and appreciate them, but always, except temporarily in the case of Hugo, without surrendering himself. Even his first campaign, when he was undeniably affected by the sentimentalism of Chateaubriand and the giddy dreams of the Cénacle, was undertaken in a spirit not altogether proper to an obedient soldier. In his novel and his poems, the hero's self-love—the hero being Sainte-Beuve himself, projected into various situations—is chilled by frosts of irony, the author smiling at his own affectations. His distaste for life, his world-weariness, common to nearly all the young literary aspirants of that period, is, we feel, a half-conscious pretence. This bitter savour, being only for the palate and no deadly drug to be actually swallowed, was merely a part, and not the least pleasant part, of life's relish. But there is

something very unattractive in feigned pessimism. In later years Sainte-Beuve seemed to remember some of these past follies with anger, and he revenged himself completely on the men who had led him astray from his own path.

Passing for the present several other moments when he is supposed to have surrendered his mind to an external influence, he has been blamed, rather plausibly, for echoing the prevalent opinions at one supreme crisis. I am not referring to his connection with the government of Louis Napoleon. He was perhaps the most eminent man of letters, certainly the most respectable journalist, to acquiesce in the imperial rule, and for thus yielding he incurred much obloquy. But it is not difficult to believe that the current of his political opinions may well have led him quite innocently to regard the Empire as at least a temporary necessity and the only alternative to a greater evil. He profited materially by his adhesion, but without baseness. It is to a later period that I refer; and the defection from independence and rectitude with which he has been charged would, if proved, be more perverse. It has been said by many, and with every degree of force, that in the last ten, twenty, or even thirty years of his life, but especially between 1865 and 1869, when he

had secured almost every form of recognition for his literary merit save only popularity, he purchased this also by pretending to be a more assured unbeliever and a more decided radical than he really was. Here again it is of the first importance to consider the whole course of his life before we judge him. And when we have apprehended even faintly the singular elusiveness of his character, we shall hesitate long before judging him at all. In his last years, after agonising efforts to believe, to establish a union between his heart and his understanding, to condemn or to justify his life, the life of the flesh, he seems to have let go all. Henceforth he neither advocates nor seeks any philosophy, any plan or ideal of existence. The world has shown to him too many contradictions; he has seen through too many systems to larger systems beyond, which in their turn have grown nebulous; the fixed stars have dissolved, the planets have wandered off and never returned, no orbits have proved calculable, all that once seemed firm has moved. Right and wrong, which he once so earnestly strove to distinguish, are now only relative to circumstances, which are themselves ever fleeting; and to direct men's courses towards truth by any reference to right and wrong is like bidding a sailor steer by a cloud,

driven before the invisible winds. At this period he avoided abstract discussion as much as possible, having no desire to impose upon other people conclusions which he knew he could disintegrate as readily as he had formed them. But if he now renounced philosophy, there remained men and women. To them, and to the facts rather than to the ultimate consequences of their conduct, he now preferred to attend.

There is a manifest connection between this last phase of Sainte-Beuve's life and the spread of a very subtle and powerful magic, the personality of Renan. Men were overcome in converse with Renan, even more than in reading his books, by a sense of things melting away. A faintness overtook them. Something came from him, some emanation, which dimmed the air and made firm outlines vague or gave an illusory distinctness to the clouds. Scepticism of the normal type analyses and demonstrates by logical process. Renan, by constructing scenes and actions cunningly different from those accepted by tradition, supplants old images with new, out of a well-furnished imagination, creative, poetic, spontaneous, and yet elaborately learned. Nothing could be more effective as a tactical device; battles are won without the waste of a frontal attack. There

was much in Sainte-Beuve's history and in the qualities of his mind to render him susceptible to the fascination of Renan. He was never immune against the charm of spirits more audaciously imaginative than himself, provided that a dash of generosity or a flavour of refinement were among the ingredients. And both of these were present in the enchanted cup, for although Renan was completely uninsistent, suave, and flexible, one could not but remember that he had endured the sort of persecution which might have made harshness and dogmatism excusable; and his solid attainments received a certain glamour from the exquisite fineness of Celtic genius. But even if Sainte-Beuve showed himself more than once capable of being subdued by such an influence, compounded of imagination, heroism, and refinement, he was never for a long time subject to sentimental sway. And it is also unfair to him to suppose that in his last years he was entirely deflected by that in Renan which was systematic rather than poetic. For he had preceded Renan along more than one route in historical criticism, though it is to Renan, and not to him, that the impressionists and the preachers of moral indifference in art look as their master. The bewildering influence of Renan upon French literature, and

especially the spell he has cast over the critics, will give place again, no doubt, to the example of Sainte-Beuve, who was more rational and deeper grounded in experience and in knowledge of human nature than his great contemporary. What Sainte-Beuve owed to Renan was the comfortable assurance that Oriental scholarship had invalidated the literary basis of Christian theology. With the defects of its moral and metaphysical bases he was already acquainted.

It is, I have said, a commonplace that Sainte-Beuve mirrored the intellectual life of France from 1826 to 1869. Certainly there is no one else of whom this can be said so truly. Nowhere else is so large a variety of French thought reflected as in the immense chronicle which his essays constitute, and when we remember the advantageous position of France throughout all that period as a field for social and political experiment interesting the entire world, the importance of his work as a mere record is readily seen. It would conceivably be possible to read Sainte-Beuve's writings in this light only, as a mere report of the thought of his time. No other documentary evidence is more accurate and complete. Balzac vainly proposed to construct, in his *Human Comedy*, a history of French society in the first half of the nineteenth century, which should be so

detailed that if all other records were destroyed a sufficient picture of the age might be found therein. Such a feat, in the more limited field of the higher intellectual life, though of course excluding the physical sciences, Sainte-Beuve really performed. He reflected the life of his time more and more truthfully as he learned, by effacing himself, to give free play to his ever widening interest in the public and private concerns of human nature.

But in this connection, again, recognition of his merit often involves an unjust denial of his personal strength and distinction. For although he did mirror the thought of France in his time, and with more abnegation than most men would have been capable of, he just as certainly coloured in his own way the light which he transmitted. He was all the time converting to a peculiar purpose of his own every ray of information that fell upon his mind, and focussing it on a certain dark spot in human destiny. To illuminate this spot was his cherished hope, as he frequently avowed, and as he always with more or less conscious distinctness felt. His temperament and early life brought him to the sight of it. His virtues and his vices led him back to it at every turn. He found it under his own feet. He read it in the story of most human beings who had ex-

pressed themselves ingenuously. This dark problem is the relation between two ever-present realities, the sensual and the spiritual in human life. If that appear an unimportant affair and not to deserve the life-long attention of a man of letters, let us ask ourselves whether there be any other to which more attention was paid by Shakespeare towards the end of his course and by Goethe in the middle part of his. Greatly or meanly, according to their several natures, almost all French writers since the break-up of classical convention have studied this question, studied too exclusively this question. Some of them have written out of the shallowness of a merely Bohemian experience; others have given free rein to imagination; others have dogmatised. Sainte-Beuve wrote with a more abundant knowledge of personal history than any of his contemporaries; he was the competent biographer of hundreds of passionate men and women, the secretary of their intimate relations. Moreover, the pendulum of his own sympathy swung far to both extremes, to the life of the senses and to the life of the spirit. His personal experience, too, was sufficiently diversified. His contribution out of his inmost being, and in addition to all he accomplished as a reporter, was of deep significance. If we study the

progress of his life in connection with his works, we behold a slowly evolving and frequently modified view of the alliances and antagonisms between the spirit and the flesh. We find a rich accretion of testimony, accurately sifted and formulated, examined in every light with intense curiosity, and at intervals marshalled in an attempt to reach a verdict. The presiding judge is his logical understanding, but this highest officer of reason is ever willing to allow some special pleader to restate the case—some emotion crying out for recognition, some venerable custom claiming the privilege of use and wont. The court as a whole becomes in this way much wider than the bar of mere understanding: it is the audience-room of reason, in the broadest meaning of the word.

Sainte-Beuve's reason progressively develops its powers, one of which, and the most perfect, is his literary taste, a finer and more trustworthy faculty than his formal judgment, though more obscure in its growth and operation. The combination of rigorous logic with intuitive tact is rare enough. In him they are both present, and both in a high degree of development. Even before he buried himself in erudite researches, he was learned; yet to know life, to feel life with his naked heart, was his constant desire. He was always able

to take into account, with reverence, the difference which genius makes, for he possessed enough of the passion of genius to realise its individualising power. He became more and more disinclined to pronounce trenchant decisions, more and more observant of nice distinctions, more and more ready to make allowances, to shift his point of view, to admit fresh evidence. This habit of mind may be hastily called inconstancy, but a more patient judgment will approve it.

In the purpose and spirit of his work he resembles no man more than Goethe, nor would it be easy to name any one else who so competently carried on, for the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century, the task that Goethe performed in the fifty years immediately preceding his death. The author of *Werther*, *Faust*, and *Wilhelm Meister*, the utterer of those wise remarks that Eckermann recorded, he too kept his eye steadily upon the disquieting problem which engaged St. Paul and Augustine, tortured the Middle Ages into ascetic suicide, and provoked the rashness of the Renaissance. Goethe, with his plastic imagination and his gift of golden verse, treated the question in the main artistically, though he often was constrained to exercise upon it his purely critical faculty.

There was one fairy at Sainte-Beuve's cradle, however, who was more generous to him than she had been to Goethe—Eironeia we may call her—and she gave him the gift of seeing objects, including himself, in all the bareness of reality; she gave him this undignifying, often cynical, and always unpoetical habit of disillusion. Here he has affinity with Montaigne. Yet he entertained aspirations at variance with this tone of mind; he felt at times the higher truth that looms behind the apparent self-deception of poetical enthusiasm; he courted the danger, he longed to be enraptured. To religion also he laid bare his soul. He was a perpetual candidate for conversion. His sensuous or, indeed, sensual temperament offered itself to the embraces of enthusiasm. Still, there was a more constant factor at work than either his physical temperament or his æsthetic and moral faculties: his logical understanding, which saw matters in a dry light. He was his own superior judge and could reverse his own decisions. And so many were the views of this upper bench that no policy remained long settled. He could not long at a time move in any one direction. The very act of progression set up a counter-current which presently drew him the other way. He was ideally unfitted for decisive action, though admirably equipped

for fruitful contemplation. He was a laboratory of moral experiment.

Three classes of subjects lay here exposed: himself, his contemporaries, and human beings embalmed in books—not so much the fictitious characters in books as their creators. There was much that was high in his life, but it was not a clean life. He appreciated all the virtues, but lived confessedly below the level of one not unattainable standard. The unnaturalness of purity confounded him; he felt that purity was, if not natural, yet noble and essential to perfection. It was not so much the inevitable cruelty and social injustice of an impure life that rebuked him; he was old-fashioned enough and imaginative enough to contemplate purity *per se*, as an ideal, and he felt its reproaches. It may or may not be true that his acquaintance lay among persons who were peculiarly fitted to afford food for reflection on this subject—he moved in so many circles; but they were certainly a frank and self-expressive company. He did not undertake the office of censor—as how could he?—except when he dealt with those whom he considered hypocrites, notably Chateaubriand, or with persons, like Balzac, whose grossness offended him. Material for forming opinion was, however, quite plentiful in the conduct

of the free, expansive, and often unbridled natures among his intimate acquaintances, especially in the heyday of Romanticism. Born and brought up in a Catholic atmosphere and educated in the traditions of a culture essentially Catholic, the contrast between spirit and flesh in the literature that preceded his own generation was early made very distinct to him. Most literature of a decidedly Catholic tone enforces the maxim of Friar Laurence:

> "Two such opposed kings encamp them still
> In man as well as herbs, grace and rude will;"

and the practical connotation of these terms in a Catholic community is neither abstract nor vague. The ideal of asceticism was ever before him. The names of Augustine and François de Sales are ever on his pen. He was attracted to study the Port-Royal recluses as much by their renouncement of the things of the flesh as by the philosophical genius of Pascal and the genius for religious leadership of Saint-Cyran and Arnauld. His passing contacts with the socialistic religion of Saint-Simon and with Swiss Protestantism were prompted in part by curiosity to observe what light their several atmospheres would throw upon his old problem. But he was not to find a solution by exchanging one sky for another,

nor by accepting any creed. And even the crumbling of the whole structure of dogmatic and historic faith within him did not exempt him from the necessity of seeking some pre-established concord, some ideal relation, between forces so opposed and yet both so essential.

Sainte-Beuve's psychological interest did not end here. He was a moralist, in the broadest sense, and always, in discussing the questions, great and small, which arose in connection with conduct, he used himself freely in the service of reason, drawing upon the experience of his own consciousness. He reveals without reserve, not to say shamelessly, whatever whisper of his heart or murmur of his senses he thinks will contribute to the natural history of man. The range of his active life was not wide as compared with the adventures and sufferings of some men; but the scope of his imagination and the variety of his emotional life were large indeed. He does not profess to speak, as a moralist, with any authority other than that of his reason and of a consensus of literary opinion. He occupies no "position", he belongs to no "school". It is for us to decide whether his words have more weight, coming from a free and sceptical mind, than if they emanated from some party or church or, on the other hand, were the utterances of some

convinced, self-assured prophet. He is worldly-wise. His sagacity is the result of seeing a great deal of life, and not inspiration at all. He has not the driving power of a Rousseau, a Carlyle, or an Emerson; his impulse does not spring from so great a height.

The danger that besets all moralists he did not escape. It seems inevitable that introspective and censorious thought should taint the mind in which it dwells. Sainte-Beuve's ambition led him to covet every kind of literary honour, except possibly that of the playwright, and he no doubt cast his eye upon the high seats of the great French moralists, Montaigne, La Bruyère, La Rochefoucauld, Pascal, and Vauvenargues. He would have been prompt to disclaim comparison with such unapproachable masters as Montaigne and Pascal, yet he ventured to follow in their footsteps, to judge them and compare them; and in his habit of composing epigrams, maxims, *pensées*, and little portraits, we may often detect a secret hope of erecting a throne like theirs. In the quality of his mind he was not without kinship with Vauvenargues, and by exerting himself he was able to imitate La Rochefoucauld, not only in spirit, but in form. But what preserved the seventeenth and eighteenth century moralists from pedantry and

unhealthiness he could not depend on, namely a uniform social convention, a highly elaborate, strictly bounded set of proprieties. He suffered from too much liberty, being obliged to set up his own limits, in a social world that was neither well organised nor stable. He was not always equal to the task, performed for the older moralists by their contemporaries, of excising the morbid elements from his work. But his inductions are in so far sound as the field in which he gathered his data was a very broad one. It is well, also, that he studied men and women primarily, and theory only through concrete example. A check, too, was imposed on over-emphasis and fatuity by that ironic humour already mentioned. And after all, if his environment lacked the solidarity of the society which supported while restraining the seventeenth and eighteenth century moralists, the ever-changing circles in which he lived, the groups dissolving and re-forming, which carried on the intellectual life of France from epoch to epoch during his lifetime, prevented his philosophy from isolating and burying itself in premature conclusions. He was surrounded by the intellectual *élite* of a nation that was still going through a revolution. And the chief medium of his inquiry was literature, that transparent veil of human nature.

It might be asked: Why this consideration of Sainte-Beuve as a moralist? Simply because, if by moralist we mean a philosophical inquirer into the motives of conduct—and what else can any one mean?—he took pains to be precisely that, and thought himself fairly successful. The exquisiteness of his literary taste, the propriety of his literary judgments, the subtlety of his style, are products of a life-long discipline in pursuit of moral, or, if you will, psychological and physiological inquiries. It was Sainte-Beuve who taught literary criticism the importance of picturing first of all an author's physical person, and even the bodily complexion of his parents and other relatives, and then his mental habits. To Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and Boileau such questioning would probably have appeared impertinent. Even to a critic so near him in spirit as Voltaire, and to Villemain, his immediate predecessor, this procedure had either not occurred or not commended itself. But from the time Sainte-Beuve made it his method it has been almost everybody's method, so that criticism is now less frequently concerned with constructing and defending systems of rhetoric and theories of literary development, and has become very generally a branch of portraiture.

Moreover, it matters immensely for our

interest in his life and our conception of the import of his works, scattered and piecemeal and exceedingly disconnected in subject as they are, that we should know which one of three possible opinions in regard to Sainte-Beuve is correct. First, is it enough to say that he was a man of sufficient knowledge and exquisite literary tact, who discoursed on literature as a representation of life and a spring of pleasure? Or secondly, must we, accepting this account, add also that he discoursed in transient moods, determined in a very remarkable degree by the opinions current and in rapid flux round about him, being himself only a receiver and transmitter of ideas which he was too dispassionate to affect by any fresh impulse of his own? Or thirdly, accepting the first view, and granting too that he held his mind steadily open, shall we not add that he was an intense, curious, passionate, even a religious man, confronted all his years, whichever way he turned, by a problem which he made his own and found in every other life, a man waylaid, haunted, pursued, in a manner of which history presents few examples more poignant? Whether or not the relation of spirit to flesh is the central puzzle of human existence, whether or not it was the crucial problem for practical philosophy in the

nineteenth century, whether or not Sainte-Beuve was mistaken in revolving so close around this axis, the fact remains that this subject possessed him. It has possessed French literature, imaginative and discursive, for a century. The apparent lack of unity in Sainte-Beuve's life is a mystery, unless one perceive the long reach and subtle windings of his constant purpose. The interplay of this indwelling motive and of forces from without is the romance of his biography. Criticism makes and justifies such high claims for itself that it is important we should understand what manner of man a critic is, not in order that we may know whether he be fit to pronounce judgments in rhetoric, for these will bear their own warrant, but in order that we may measure him on the plane of human interests in general, where it is his dangerous privilege to add speculation to history. We need only remember the authority exercised by Taine, Renan, and Brunetière. No large political policy in France, to this day, no statesman's position, no priest's office, no teacher's programme and stipend, but is affected by their writings. Scarcely any important newspaper editorial, or any article in a review, or any volume of poetry, fiction, history, or philosophy, now appears in France that is not in some sense a vehicle of Taine's

personality, or Renan's, or Brunetière's. Trivial and impertinent detail, the purposeless accumulation of irrelevant anecdotes—of all this we have had too much, not only in regard to Sainte-Beuve, but in regard to every writer of whose life anything is known or can be guessed. On the other hand, it is unreasonable to demand that we shall let the works of a great leader of thought speak for themselves, without the comment that can be legitimately drawn from his life.

Sainte-Beuve's works are imposing in extent. Their vitality, contrary to what is generally the case with very productive authors, depends upon their extent. If he shall go down to remote posterity, he must float on the high average of excellence in hundreds of distinct pieces, for none of his critical papers stand out from the rest. Opinion has not, thus far, chosen some and forgotten others, nor does it seem likely that this usual step in the history of a classic will be taken here. Yet it is not likely that the sixty or seventy volumes of his works will continue many years longer to be generally read, and it may well be that his influence will in the future not be immediate, but will be, in the main, indirectly transmitted through a few students who have the leisure to read him copiously. It is in this way,

largely, through the citations made by those who have read him enough to catch his spirit, that Voltaire is still effective. And few observers of French life will maintain that the effectiveness of Voltaire is sensibly diminishing. The value of Sainte-Beuve's works, even considered singly, depends on their extent, or, to speak more moderately, is greatly enhanced thereby; for his competence in the whole field lends authority in detail, and the bigness of his total, by a force analogous to gravitation, makes the parts cohere. He is best known as a literary critic; yet no single volume of his critical essays is so necessary to a person who would really comprehend him as his one novel or any of the volumes of his poetry or of his correspondence. Apart from their substantive value, these are important because they help us to realise the states of mind in which Sainte-Beuve judged literature; for he was not only an expositor, but sat in judgment. Many of his changes of attitude are inexplicable until the circumstances of his life are known. For example, his silence through many years in regard to the man whom all the world was reading and discussing might be regarded as prophetic of the approaching decline of Victor Hugo's fame, and attributed to a keener penetration than even Sainte-Beuve possessed, did

not the facts of the critic's life and its records in his letters and poems reveal the actual reason.

His numerous productions may, for the moment, to attain a sort of formal order, be divided into three kinds: works of imagination; correspondence and autobiography; history and literary criticism. Under the first head are his poems and his prose fiction. He published several stories and a novel, all so personal in purpose that they are in effect autobiographical sketches. He published three volumes of poetry during his lifetime, and left printed copies of a fourth to be distributed after his death. The poetry also is a more or less veiled representation of certain stretches in his life, and what it loses as art, because of its limited intention, is a gain, but a dangerous and elusive gain, to biography. His letters to the Princess Mathilde, three volumes of general correspondence, three shorter collections of his letters, and his correspondence with M. and Madame Juste Olivier have been published, not to mention what has appeared recently in periodicals and what will no doubt continue to appear for some time. He left in manuscript a short sketch of his life, written in 1861 or later, and in 1868 he wrote another for a volume issued by the University of Liège to commemorate its fiftieth anniversary. Be-

sides all this, there are hundreds of detached reflections, aphorisms, footnotes, and marginalia, many of them autobiographical. He was so completely fitted by nature for the exercise of his chief function that he remains a critic of literature and a moralist, even when he attempts imaginative art or writes familiar letters. Many of his poems are disquisitions, studies, illustrations, and even in some instances direct analyses, not of life at first hand, but of life as expressed in books. There is a world filled with the men and women whom poets have created. Moreover, there is a world of ideas, which for some people are just as concrete as Helen of Troy or Othello. In Sainte-Beuve's works of imagination these two societies move on the same plane, and almost indiscriminately, with persons in actual life. Many distinctions must be denied him as novelist and as poet; perhaps, however, he may be regarded as notable for this curious peculiarity. It follows from the quality of his imaginative writings that, whether their value as works of art be small or great, they must illuminate his career, they must help us to understand his point of view when he is engaged in appraising the value of a contemporary book or interpreting the figures of a by-gone era in terms of his own age and environment.

His great historical work, *Port-Royal*, is more than a history of the Jansenist movement. It is also a series of biographies, in which Saint-Cyran, Pascal, Nicole, Arnauld, Lancelot, Saci, Séricourt, Mother Angélique, and Racine are drawn at full length; a large field of profound moral research; and in every part a work of literary analysis and judgment. In his lives of the socialist leader P.-J. Proudhon, the general Jomini, the poetess Madame Desbordes-Valmore, and the diplomatist Talleyrand, and even in his published addresses, the professional moralist and critic makes himself felt.

Of literary criticism pure and simple, making no claim to be anything else, we have, besides his *Study of Virgil* (*Étude sur Virgile*) and his *Chateaubriand and His Literary Group under the Empire* (*Chateaubriand et son Groupe littéraire sous l'Empire*), both of them the product of courses of lectures, and his formal treatise on a period of French literary history, the *Historical and Critical Account of French Poetry and the French Drama in the Sixteenth Century* (*Tableau historique et critique de la Poésie française et du Théâtre français au XVIme Siècle*), an immense collection of essays and reviews, most of which, either as now printed or in their original form, appeared first as

contributions to newspapers and magazines. For business reasons, they have been published in several series of volumes, as follows: *Literary Portraits* (*Portraits littéraires*), three volumes; *Contemporary Portraits* (*Portraits contemporains*), five volumes; *Portraits of Women* (*Portraits de Femmes*), one volume; *First Monday Talks* (*Premiers Lundis*), three volumes; *Monday Talks* (*Causeries du Lundi*), fifteen volumes; *New Monday Talks* (*Nouveaux Lundis*), thirteen volumes; *Parisian Chronicles* (*Chroniques parisiennes*), one volume; *Note-books* (*Les Cahiers de Sainte-Beuve*), one volume. The total number of articles in the forty-two volumes of these collections is about one thousand. By far the larger part of his productions are seen, therefore, to be detached articles, and most of these were written to meet outside demands, and not according to a general plan. The first one to be reprinted in permanent form by Sainte-Beuve himself was written in 1824, and the series is closed by those he wrote in the year of his death, 1869. It would seem impossible to avoid monotony of style, to preserve freshness of view, to live free from degrading compromises and weak complacency, and withal to interest posterity, under such circumstances—on the stretch, forty-five years, writing papers

of about the same length, for the daily and monthly press. Yet Sainte-Beuve, while amply fulfilling all the conditions required by journalism, achieved a monumental *work*, durable, classic. Despite the levelling tendency of his medium, the work is personal, rings with his voice, unmistakably and inalienably his. He accomplished the double requirement of renewing himself constantly, by dipping in the current of knowledge and sympathy, and of maintaining his integrity. Not all the credit for his remarkable success belongs to him, however; the intelligence of the readers for whom he wrote in the first instance counted for much —their intelligence and also their liberality, which forbade them, in general, to put too heavy a pressure on him. He was allowed by his public to follow his bent, a freedom which would have been given him nowhere else in the world. We shall see how wide he ranged: now going a long way back in time and into questions of scholarship, again modern, popular, disseminating spicy scandals of the day; now far afield, discoursing of English, German, Italian, Dutch, and Swedish poetry, again parochial, so that the pages smell of such and such a street, square, or alley of Paris; now following an intricate thread of conduct with the subtlest casuistry, again broad and clear and gay.

RELATION TO NINETEENTH CENTURY

It is not only the extraordinary usefulness of these essays, nor the monumental worth of *Port-Royal*, that lends interest to Sainte-Beuve's life. With all his misplaced ambitions and his deviations due to passions of the heart and promptings of sense, he was a judge among men. He traversed his age as one who bore the accumulated experience of the past; and in spite of himself he prophesied unto his generation.

CHAPTER II

THE BACKGROUND

Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve was born at Boulogne-sur-Mer, on the 23d of December, 1804. His father, Charles-François de Sainte-Beuve, was born at Moreuil in Picardy, about twelve miles southeast of Amiens, November 6, 1752. The particle *de*, which in this case, as in many others, did not indicate that its bearer belonged to the nobility, was dropped, probably for prudential reasons, during the Revolution, though resumed afterwards upon occasion. Charles-François was one of a large family of children born by Marie Donzelle to Jean-François de Sainte-Beuve, who held a small administrative office at Moreuil, being himself the son of a local official. Charles-François appears to have been employed in Boulogne at least as early as 1779. On the death of his father, who left him a small property, he removed finally to Boulogne in 1788, where he held successively several minor positions in the excise and town-customs office, until their suppression in 1791. Under the first Republic, he was *administrateur* of the

department of Pas-de-Calais. Subsequently he was restored to office in the municipal customs of Boulogne and promoted to the position of chief controller of the consolidated duties, which he retained till his death, on October 4, 1804. In that same year, on the 21st of March, this quiet man of fifty-one, having a very moderate income, with a salary of fifteen hundred francs, had married a woman forty years of age, Mademoiselle Augustine Coilliot, who was born in 1764. Of her family little is known, except that her father was a sailor of Boulogne and her mother an Englishwoman.

Filial piety was one of Sainte-Beuve's strong traits, and he took pains to create in his mind an image of the father whom he had never seen. For this he depended on the recollections of his mother and of his father's sister, Marie-Thérèse Cormier, a widow, who had a large share in his bringing up and had been devoted to her brother, and also upon his father's library, which contained books annotated by the elder man. Whether by inheritance or from imitation of these cherished memorials, Sainte-Beuve's handwriting was, it is said, singularly like his father's. François Morand, an old schoolmate of Sainte-Beuve and judge in the civil court at Boulogne, is authority for this, and writes:

"Looking one day at old books in one of the Boulogne markets, I found an *Almanach des Muses*, in pamphlet form, all written over, on the back and margins, with pencilled notes, sometimes signed *de Sainte-Beuve*. I thought these notes were by the hand of the well-known Sainte-Beuve, till he himself informed me of my mistake, assuring me that there was another Sainte-Beuve to know."

The most remarkable feature of the library was a collection of periodicals of the Revolutionary period, with his father's marginal notes. The presence of a *Muses' Almanac* and of Voltaire's works would indicate that the republican office-holder mingled a taste for light poetry with a liking for the eighteenth century philosophy. The son was proud to know that his father owned and was familiar with a handsome copy of Virgil. It gave Sainte-Beuve pleasure to use this book in preparing his lectures for the Collège de France, which were printed as his *Study of Virgil*. A few weeks before his death, thanking M. Morand for certain researches, he wrote: "The discovery of a literary society at Boulogne in 1779 is interesting. I am not astonished that my father was one of its promoters; for he was essentially literary, and all his books, covered with marginal notes, declare his tastes." In particular, there were a number of "Reflections and Judgments" by the elder Sainte-Beuve, which M. Morand has printed. They

were found written in a copy of the *Memoirs* of Riouffe, and are philosophical remarks on the Revolution, such as might have been forced from the mind of a disappointed rationalist, reacting against the anarchy through which France had just passed. He had been a member of a Revolutionary club, founded in 1790, which included some of the most respected and intelligent citizens of Boulogne. As an office-holder, he had been unwilling to protest too loudly against the extremists, but had suffered, nevertheless, in consequence of their fury. His views were moderate. In short, he was a Girondin during the Revolution, and in the end a political philosopher sobered by disappointment and inclined to count the cost of idealistic experiment. Some of his maxims are profound and admirably expressed. They show the same flexibility of mind and the same vivacity of phrase which mark the epigrams of his son. The following specimens represent their general trend:

"For ten years, authority, divided in France, moved incessantly from system to system, from theory to theory, from essay to essay, from error to error, substituting abstractions for principles, the uncertain results of versatility for the counsels of reason, violence for the conservative force of states—until the 18th Brumaire appeared."

"Montaigne has said admirably, 'Everything must be done for and not by the people.' These few words contain

more political science than all the writings of Voltaire and Rousseau."

"The philosophy of the eighteenth century! It shook our altars and overthrew the most flourishing empire in the universe."

He had seen tyranny in three forms, the old monarchy, the Revolutionary tribunals, the military despotism of Napoleon; and remarked:

"He who analyses the character of a tyrant shall find in it all varieties of servitude, meanness, and misery, and very little domination. What shameful complicities, what debasing lies! How many friends betrayed, abandoned, surrendered! How many outrages swallowed in silence! Virtue alone exercises real dominion; for she commands him who possesses her, and others too. She alone needs genius in order to succeed; for her choice of means is limited. She alone is proud; for she can never compromise with vice. She alone is audacious; for she never stifles a generous sentiment."

He puts his finger upon the nerve the severing of which gave the Terror full sway to cut and bruise:

"Men had the strength to die, but no strength to resist their executioners. This combination of heroism and cowardice would be incomprehensible to any other than an eye-witness. It means that the system of spying and reporting was so well organised that no one dared open his mouth in any nook or cranny in France."

Yet, for all his disenchantment, he does not write like one hostile to the principles of the Revolution or blind to its good results. He pro-

tests that "you cannot stir the life of a nation, any more than that of a pond or river, without bringing up mephitic gases", and he asks:

> "Might not the overthrow of social order which we have experienced in France be compared to those hurricanes which sometimes rage in the American colonies? They seem as if they would destroy everything, but as soon as calm is restored it is apparent that they have revived nature and given her fresh fecundity."

The father of Sainte-Beuve was evidently a grave, practical man, accustomed to view events from the standpoint of an official, to whom regularity and order appeared worth purchasing even by the sacrifice of theoretical liberalism. It is not without reason that Sainte-Beuve's political conservatism, his instinctive dread of revolutions, and his early interest in the memoirs of that troubled time have been regarded as a heritage from his father. His love of books and his distinct preference for the literature of refinement, a preference which he retained in the surcharged atmosphere of Romanticism, may well have been due to the same source. His intellectual starting-point, he once remarked, was at the place which his father's mind had come to; and we may add that where he began, there he also ended, with a taste for cool Virgilian beauty.

But if the elements of his intellectual tastes and some of his literary prepossessions were thus derived from the father whom he never saw, it was Sainte-Beuve's mother who formed his little characteristic habits. He resembled her in face and constitution. He was, like her, extremely attentive to small details, orderly, diligent, careful of domestic comfort. His secretary, Jules Troubat, relates that he was "laborious, methodical to the point of first writing out in prose the outlines and the details of his poems, singularly regular and concentrated in his work, making and observing every day a division of time between work and play". When he came into the world, bringing back to his mother all that could possibly be restored of his dead father, it was as if death had relinquished somewhat of its booty. She devoted herself exclusively to his training and education. As he grew, she identified him with his father, and it was said by one of Sainte-Beuve's friends, who asked for him at the door of her house in Paris, that she called out to her son, "Are you there, Sainte-Beuve?" as a wife might call to her husband. At the age of fifty or sixty he strikingly resembled his mother in feature. Troubat describes him as he was in 1861, "short of stature, erect, corpulent, his face full, clean

shaven every morning, his nose prominent, a scrutinising, ferreting nose, his cranium bald and rising to a point, his eyebrows reddish-brown and bushy". Another observer says that at sixty he had the visage of a woman of mature years, plump and soft-skinned, and that his hands were delicate. It was often remarked that his benign yet cautious glance, his soft voice, and his habit of extending four fingers united instead of giving a real hand-shake, imparted to him the air of a discreet old woman or of a priest. He said himself that had he been born a hundred years earlier he would have chosen to be one of those soft-footed abbés who composed verses and confessed court ladies. There was in him, or so at least his enemies have often declared, a feline grace and a feline hardness. But what appeared disagreeable in him was matronly virtue in his mother. The author of an article on Sainte-Beuve published in 1845 wrote of her: "Madame Sainte-Beuve, who is still living, has a practical turn of mind, and conceals, I am told, under simple and quiet manners, a very remarkable fineness of observation. She cares more for her son's prose than for his verse, and in his prose prefers the learned and critical parts to his works of imagination."

The domestic life at Boulogne must have been rather narrow. His mother and his aunt, by putting their resources together, possessed a house and a small subsistence, from three to four thousand francs a year. Sainte-Beuve retained through life a physical timidity, a reluctance to make bold decisions, a habit of saving old letters, notes, and scraps of information, and of returning again and again to work that seemed already done, which remind us that he was an only child, brought up with extreme care by two old women.

His mother and his aunt were not "devout", according to the usual acceptation of that term in a French town. They sent him to a secular school, a fact which would imply independence, if not indifference, in religion. Yet one of his earliest recollections is recorded thus, in a somewhat fantastic poem:

"Half-forgotten days, whose trace revives! Childhood memories, as sweet to the soul as a dream of coming time! It was at such an hour—oh, well do I remember—that we children were led, after vespers, to the chapel choir. The lamp burned yellow, and yellow too the tapers, and the light gleamed on the veiled brows of the virgins, turning their whiteness yellow; and the priest in his white stole bent his yellow face like a head of wheat bowing to the reaper's sickle."

M. Morand remembered him as a practising Catholic, attending early service at church and

preparing for communion. And in the long series of letters, beginning in 1818 and ending in 1865, which he wrote to the Abbé Eustache Barbe, a friend from early boyhood at Boulogne, it is apparent that in the years before their separation, when Sainte-Beuve went to Paris, though he was troubled with doubts, he yet possessed faith. The point is important, for at different stages of his career he gave different accounts of his original attitude towards religion, colouring his childhood with the light of later days. Although he may have been representing himself to Barbe all along as more religious than he really was, it is almost necessary to infer from the letters that near the beginning of his self-conscious existence he was a simple and sympathetic believer. At some time he must have known Christianity from within. Lacking such an experience he could hardly have written *Port-Royal* and many a passage scattered through his other works. It is quite likely that the household at Boulogne, emerging without religious belief from the eighteenth century, submitted gradually to the reactionary influences that were affecting France between 1804 and 1818. Annoyed by "ecclesiastical calumny", Sainte-Beuve in 1868 described his early training, with some asperity, as almost purely secular.

"My childhood," he declared, "was passed in the memories and the society of the First Empire, which certainly was not churchly. My mother and a sister of my father, who lived with her, were persons who performed their duties, no doubt, going to mass on Sunday and communing perhaps once a year (though I never noticed it), but they had absolutely no connection with the churchly people, who were quite distinct and quite apart in those days. When the time came to send me to school, there was a choice between two rival institutions at Boulogne: the one secular, managed by M. Blériot, where there was a good teacher and humanist, M. Clouet, of Montdidier; the other a church affair, seated in the buildings that had once been the bishop's palace, managed by priests, and having M. Haffreingue as head. My mother was very careful not to send me to this latter house, and I studied as a day-pupil at the Blériot institution. My reason, however, was not really emancipated till the first year of my life in Paris, 1818–1819; but up to that time, in my pure and peaceful home, even if nothing had hastened in me that intellectual emancipation, nothing had hindered it, and my thoughts had followed the natural development of the age. In the first years of my life in Paris I kept up some of my childhood's friendships at Boulogne, especially one with Eustache Barbe, a former pupil of M. Blériot, who had gone over to M. Haffreingue's, where he assumed the cassock and became a professor of philosophy. A great intimacy had sprung up between this young man and me, and even after he entered M. Haffreingue's we used to take long walks together on Thursday afternoons, in the valleys of the neighbourhood and along the seashore. I have said something about this in one of my poems. After my departure to Paris we were glad to see each other in the vacations. Our talk ran ordinarily on the most serious subjects and the eternal problems, Barbe holding out for faith, for tradition, for the doctrines of Bonald, etc., while I was a rationalist

and pleaded the contrary opinions. We remained good friends for many years. These are my real impressions of childhood. . . . Such was the first air I breathed, and never (thank God) the air of oratories, mysterious chapels, nor sacristies."

There is temper in these lines, and it is true they were written when he had finally ranged himself, after much vacillation, against historic Christianity and had an obvious interest in proving that the course of his life had not been altogether inconsistent with its origins. Yet I cannot agree with his French biographers, who, without exception I think, cast suspicion upon this statement. It carries far more weight with me than anything to the contrary which may be inferred from his protestations of faith during the period of his romantic intoxication. Motives of a social nature and motives of an artistic nature inclined him then to exaggerate the sensibility of his childhood, whether amatory or mystical.

One would naturally suppose that a love of adventure or some special knowledge of the sea would show itself in the writings of a man of imagination whose early boyhood had been spent on the shore of the English Channel. But there is nothing of the sort in Sainte-Beuve's case, in spite of his habit of turning old experiences and impressions to account. He made as much poetical use as possible out

of a few childish attachments to little girls, when in later years he was economically stirring the soil of his memory in the hope of bringing forth flowers of poesy. The soil was not rich in romantic elements, however, and the plants were a sickly growth. Some of these recollections are open to the same suspicion as his incongruous descriptions of his early mysticism. They may have been imagined, to stimulate a mood required for the composition of *Volupté* and *Joseph Delorme*.

At the Blériot institution he was a tractable and diligent boy, the best scholar and a great prize-winner. In such an academy he would be well grounded in French composition and made to learn by heart and analyse many of the finest pages of the French classics. Latin was taught with special thoroughness, and it was here that Sainte-Beuve laid the foundation of his extensive and intimate acquaintance, not only with the principal works of Latin literature, but with minor authors of the Roman Empire, with Augustine, and with mediæval writers. There was far more work than play in his childhood, and very little free out-door sport with other boys. No striking event or mark of decided character is recorded of those early days. After the dullness of his youth, he appears to have carried into later years a

huge craving for pleasure and a certain awkwardness. Sainte-Beuve upon occasion seems a complete man of the world. He knew most of the eminent persons of his time in France; his acquaintance extended from the lodging-houses of medical students and poor journalists to the palaces of the Quartier Saint-Germain; he concerned himself with politics, education, and the entire range of literary activity. Yet there clung to him, from those days of restraint, a lack of self-confidence, which he had continually to force himself to overcome. He appears at times as if not naturally familiar with the ordinary rude laws that govern intercourse between man and man. He was forever recommencing and feeling his way with people, and often puzzled them by his insinuating approach. He might have learned in the fields or on the playground the blunt loyalty which boys teach one another, and have been the happier and better for the lesson. In the public life of France between 1804 and 1818 there was, however, much to interest and develop a boy and take him out of himself. Stories of the projected invasion of England, in which Boulogne was to have played an important part, would be still echoing in the streets. And he was old enough to hear rumours of the Russian campaign and news of

the battle of Leipzig, to share the excitement of the Hundred Days, and to realise what Waterloo meant. As he expressed it in a poem:

"Startled children of an age of wonders, rocked beneath the standard by the cannon's breath, lisping the names of battles beyond the Rhine, all of us hold in our memories more than one day when the Empire lifted its crowned head—some triumphant display, an army, a funeral train, an ardent Te Deum, the birth of a king; and the Emperor himself, campaigning, counting his companions, the eagles, saluting a whole people, bidding us adieu—and on me who speak now, on me his glance fell too!"

The generation of great writers to which Sainte-Beuve belonged were nourished on strong food and came quickly to maturity. They were not born into a world surrounded with a vague shimmering horizon; the points of the compass were distinctly marked, and their first glimpses fell upon eminences close at hand. The old Monarchy and its restoration, separated by less than three decades—they could understand that, and it served as a resting-point for their gaze. The Revolution must have been a confused scene as a whole, though very distinct in certain spots where it most affected their family destinies. The Empire, however, was the most massive and imposing boundary to their view, and accordingly we find its traditions underlying the thought of Balzac, Hugo, and Sainte-Beuve. Under the Empire, even

more than in the eighteenth century, Paris eclipsed the provinces. The concentration there of the best classical schools was a marked tendency, the reverse of what prevails in America and Great Britain. Napoleon's policy, and the enormous disproportion of excitement between Parisian life and life in other French cities during his rule, drained the provinces of their most active minds, and when tranquillity became more assured, in the first years of the Restoration, the rush to the capital was very general. Here were the famous *lycées*, or high schools, comparatively free from clerical influence and much more rigorous in their requirements than the schools of smaller cities. And besides, the fascination of the metropolis was strongly felt by families which found the oppression and silence of provincial existence unendurable after the stirring years between 1789 and 1815.

Before Sainte-Beuve was quite fourteen, he thought he had exhausted the benefits of the Blériot institution. He wished to study Greek in Paris, under accomplished masters. One of his father's brothers was a wine-dealer there, and might be helpful. In September, 1818, his mother took him to Paris, and, after experiencing some difficulty, placed him in a boarding-house, kept by a M. Landry, for boys who

attended the Collège Charlemagne. He quickly rose to a high place in the classes of the college and distinguished himself as a prize-winner. In his third year, one of his teachers was Paul-François Dubois, who was, in the course of the twelvemonth, deprived of his position because of his liberalism. Sainte-Beuve attracted his attention, and Dubois preserved among his papers an ode which the boy composed at that time, entitled *A Young Italian Poet at the Tomb of Tasso*. Two years later we find Sainte-Beuve, in a crisis of his life, going to this older friend for counsel, and in 1824, when Dubois founded the *Globe* periodical, he gave Sainte-Beuve his real start in life as one of its contributors. The Landry establishment, which directed his studies and supplied the place of a home, removed to another part of the city in 1821, and Sainte-Beuve, changing with it, attended for two years the Collège Bourbon, with his usual application and success. Fifty-one of his college themes, some in French, some in Latin, dating from 1821 and 1822, were published in 1831 as models of their kind, by one of his former masters. Here we find such subjects as *Scipio in senatu pro Annibale*, *Menenius Agrippa ad populum*, *Carolus V imperio se abdicat*, *Antonius Octavium hortatur ad persequendos Cæsaris interfectores*. In the

Landry establishment he was treated with special consideration, because of his studious habits and the honours he won in the colleges. He had a seat at the master's table, and was allowed to go out at night to hear lectures.

He was already taking an interest in literature, apart from his regular school work. In a letter to another boy from Boulogne, named Adam, who lived in a different *pension* at Paris, he expresses enthusiastic admiration for the writings of Casimir Delavigne: "I am crazy over Delavigne, and I believe that although people say envy always dogs the footsteps of merit, he will prove an exception to the rule and be no less loved than admired by his contemporaries." When the great critic succeeded Delavigne as a member of the French Academy, in 1845, M. Adam, who on his part rose to be mayor of Boulogne, returned this letter to him. Sainte-Beuve in the meanwhile had modified his opinion of Delavigne, and received much new light on the relation of envy to merit.

He kept up a correspondence with his old friend Barbe, who was studying for the priesthood at Boulogne. These letters are the chief direct testimony we possess as to his inner life at that time. The *Life of Joseph Delorme*, a supposedly autobiographical sketch prefixed to his first volume of poems, which appeared

in 1829, some of these poems themselves, and his novel *Volupté* have always been quoted with much confidence to establish a picture of him in adolescence, but as sources of exact information they are suspicious. They were written partly for the purpose of creating a romantic sentiment in his favour in one or two women upon whom he desired to make a certain impression; he designed them to match a particular shade of literary fashion; the spirit that moulds their details is constructive, and not reminiscent; it is a spirit widely at variance with what we find in the letters actually written in his youth. This is not saying, however, that an unusual degree of voluptuous curiosity may not have co-existed with his ambitious and overstrained school-life and the entertaining of religious ideals. Whether or not he was like the lugubrious and absurd dabbler in vice and mawkish "piety" whom he describes in the dreary pages of *Volupté*, the existence he led as a very young man can hardly be called healthy, and skill in Latin composition may be purchased at too dear a rate. The farm, the playing-field, household duties and delights, nearly everything that makes boyhood memorable, formed small part of his after he left Boulogne. It was a life of books and toil, under the incentive

of competition and in circumstances not conducive to manly self-government.

We possess three of Sainte-Beuve's letters written to Barbe from the Landry *pension*. The first, undated, must have been sent in 1818 or early in 1819. It is as follows:

"My dear Friend:

"I think of you unceasingly, and being separated from my family, too, I feel more than ever the need of a friend, and can find none like you. I cannot recall without a sweet sensation those short walks we used to take on the sand, relaxing so agreeably our bodies and our minds. The *pension* where I am is at least like M. Blériot's,* but the master's son is an excellent young man and not lacking in knowledge. I am glad you have not forgotten me. . . . I am very fond of our professor at the *lycée*. I don't think anybody could teach a class better than he does. We are translating, in Greek, Homer, the second book of the *Iliad*, the *Life of Cicero*, by Plutarch, and the *Gospels;* in Latin, Sallust's *Jugurthine War*, the *Thoughts of Cicero*, and Virgil, third book of the *Æneid*. I will give you more details about our course some other time, when I answer your letter. I advise you not to work too hard, and to rest a little this year after the fatigue of last year. B., who is with me, is working very well and appears to like study. G., whom we came near losing, is beginning to get better. Give my respects to your family and embrace your brothers for me. I expect to write to you through Mr. G. and to wish you a happy year. I embrace you. Think sometimes of your faithful friend,

"Sainte-Beuve."

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* "Not in the least" would make better sense, and is perhaps what he meant.

The strangeness of this letter from a lad of thirteen or fourteen is due partly to the formality of epistolary French as practised by ambitious beginners, partly to the fact that it had to be translated, but also, no doubt, to the priggishness of its author. "The master's son is an excellent young man and not lacking in knowledge"—"those short walks that relaxed so agreeably our bodies and our minds"! This is the language of a model boy, of course, yet quite sincere, no doubt, and rather pathetic.

An even grander elevation is attained, here and there, in the second letter:

"Dear Friend:

"If I have been so long about answering your kind letter, do not accuse my idleness, still less my heart. In spite of the frequent holidays we have had, I have not been able to satisfy my desire. I am charmed to see that M. Haffreingue appreciates your accomplishments and gives you the rank you deserve. I hope that, as you promised in your last letter, you will profit by the leisure you will now possess, and not forget a friend who is also faithfully attached to you. I am beginning to get accustomed to the absence of my dear mamma, not that I do not feel all that it means, but when I consider with what rapidity these first three months have slipped away, I bid myself be patient, in the expectation that the rest will pass with the same swiftness, and I shall soon be able to embrace and see again friends whom I can find nowhere else. Religion too is what contributes much to console me. At home, when I had any little grief, I carried it to the bosom of my good, kind relatives, or to yours, dear friend, for you were worthy of such trust.

To-day, on the contrary, I have no one to whom I may confide my troubles; so I pray inwardly to God, and thus open a way to dissipate my sorrow. I perform all my duties as exactly as I can, and your example is continually before my eyes, to prevent my departing ever from the good principles which I have received. I am also fortunate in having such a good professor, and one so attached to me. Next to M. Clouet, he is the one who has shown me most affection, and lavished most attention on me. And so I am doing all I can to satisfy him and retain his friendship. When you write, have the kindness to tell me, if you can, which of my old comrades and acquaintances are getting on best. I shall always be interested, and it will give me great pleasure. Don't be afraid, dear friend, of making your letters too long. You cannot tell me too much. I wish I had more to tell you, but my heart says enough, and time does not permit me to expatiate any further. Embrace your brothers for me, and give my respects to your kind parents. I love you, and will be through life

"Your faithful friend,

"SAINTE-BEUVE."

A third letter, written early in 1820, contains a paragraph designed to allay Barbe's fears lest the "good principles" mentioned above may be less resolutely held:

"As you have always known me, such I still am to-day. I have been too well served by the principles I have followed until now to be willing ever to give them up; and if this awful idea should come into my head, your example alone and the good counsel you have given me would be enough to recall me to the straight path."

These letters have more than once been cited as a proof that Sainte-Beuve's origins

were Christian. Their conciliatory and deferential tone, a certain dressed-up air, may, however, lead to the more reasonable inference that they reveal almost nothing as to his spiritual state. They were written to please Barbe, as much as to express the writer's mind, and are specimens of that fluid adaptability which always made it difficult for Sainte-Beuve, except in matters of literary taste, to speak out frankly on controverted points. The lad's principles were indeed under a strain, but it would not be safe to accept his remarks to the tender-hearted Barbe without scrutiny. In those days in France a person's political views determined his religion, to a very large extent, and the converse was no less true. The prevalent tone among those engaged in higher education in Paris was even more distinctly anti-clerical than anti-monarchical. Some were, broadly speaking, Voltairians, resting in the negative simplicity of the eighteenth century philosophy, and pleased to remain content with its general optimism, in spite of the discouragement that succeeded the moral abyss of the Directory, the Consulate, and the Empire. They were more sceptical than their fathers, more disillusioned. They were more convinced materialists, though less dogmatic in this or in any other direction.

Others, more sanguine or younger, were attached to the new developments of the system of Condillac. There were, in the University, no considerable number of adherents to any distinctly Christian philosophy, other than the orthodox Aristotelianism of the mediæval Church.

The youth of the schools were not attracted to this, especially where it was taught insincerely and with innuendoes against its validity. "I was already emancipated," remarks Sainte-Beuve, "when I studied philosophy under M. Damiron. I did not believe much of it." This refers to his last year at the Collège Bourbon. "My reason," he wrote in 1868, "was not really emancipated until the first year of my sojourn in Paris, 1818–1819." "M. Landry was a free-thinker," his pupil tells us. Dubois, as we have seen, lost his place because of his opinions. A distinguished son of Boulogne, Daunou, an ex-priest, who had been a prominent member of the Convention and closely associated with the work of the Revolution, showed the lad favour, through love of their native place. Daunou was a rare example of consistency, for he maintained his Revolutionary principles even while serving the cause of learning under Napoleon, was cashiered at the Restoration, and, though appointed professor of moral science at the

Collège de France in 1819, continued to teach a philosophy essentially materialistic. The spirit of revolt was rising in the schools. As soon as the students had time to test the government of Louis XVIII and found it weak, the tide swelled and an active propaganda of protest made way through the University. Many professors who had bowed their heads at the establishment of the Concordat, and also at the more pompous triumph of official religion in 1815, remembered their supineness with irritation, and were bitterly determined to regain the upper hand by a campaign of education. The deepest layer of intellectual impressions in Sainte-Beuve was that stratum of eighteenth century rationalism and radical republicanism which had been laid by his father's memory and his father's books. The second layer, of docile faith, insensibly deposited at Boulogne in years when the Catholic reaction was almost irresistible, could not have been very thick, or he would hardly have been so careful to measure it, at the age of fourteen. And when a third deposit was superimposed, so like the first, it crushed and quite transformed the soft rock of his faith. Whatever may have been his political views when he came to Paris, he was, by 1823, like his father and the heroes of his father's books, a moderate

radical. So were most of those among his teachers and comrades who had imagination and generosity. The arrival of his mother, who joined him in September, 1823, does not appear to have exercised any restraining effect. He had already begun to follow lectures on physiology, natural history, and chemistry, and the instruction was for the most part materialistic. One of his new masters was Magendie.

In the autumn of 1823 he entered the Medical School, where he remained in attendance the next four years, although, as we shall see, other work occupied most of his time. His medical studies served to strengthen what we should now, perhaps, term his "positivism"; they increased his regard for facts, and accustomed him to respect exact demonstration. They destroyed some of his ideals, by making him familiar with the merely physical aspects of human life and with pain and fear. Of course they might also have acquainted him with some of the noblest qualities of human nature, but it is evident that the immediate effect of his medical training was a recoil of his imagination, his idealising instincts, his poetical sentiments, and his religious half-convictions. The result was an unhappy state of mind, rendered worse by the cravings of an ill-governed temperament, by low spirits, by a self-devouring ambi-

tion, and probably, too, by a reduced condition of bodily health, resulting from over-study without sufficient exercise. Fits of melancholy and indifference alternated with curiosity to know all that could be learned and experience all that could be felt. He was introspective, morbidly curious, and morose. Yet the discipline of his scientific training was a lasting advantage, for in after years he was accustomed to ascribe to his medical education whatever good qualities of method he may have shown in his literary work. Speaking in the Senate, in 1868, he said of the Medical School: "It is to it that I owe the philosophical spirit, the love of precision and of physiological reality, and whatever good methodical procedure my writings, even my literary writings, may possess." And certainly, considering the kind of questions with which literature in the nineteenth century was to deal, these few years were not too much time for him to spend in greater or less familiarity with scientific conceptions.

This acquaintance shows itself in scores of passages. It suggested one of the principal and most original features of his method of literary criticism and character-portrayal. "The physiology and the hygiene of a writer," he says, in one of the *Causeries du Lundi*, "have become one of the indispensable chapters

in the analysis of his talent. M. de Balzac prided himself on being a physiologist, and he certainly was one, although a less rigorous and exact one than he fancied; but the physical constitution of himself and others plays a large rôle and is continually perceptible in his moral descriptions. . . . There is a point in his analysis where the veritable and real plexus ends and the illusory plexus begins, and he does not distinguish between them." Here, as in so many other passages, Sainte-Beuve thinks in figures which are reminiscent of the Medical School. Again he remarks: "If you could know the race physiologically, the ancestors, the forefathers, you would obtain a strong light on the secret and essential quality of minds, but generally this deep root remains in the dark and escapes our observation. Wherever it is not entirely concealed, we shall do well to study it. You can discover, you can recognise the superior man in his parents, especially in his mother, the most direct and sure relationship."

"I had a decided taste for the study of medicine," he tells us. Nevertheless, long before the conclusion of his medical course he was to establish relations so much more congenial that he became almost completely detached from the Medical School. "Finding it easier to succeed in literature, I went over to

it," he says. His curiosity was satisfied. He had gained a point of view and elements of scientific method. He had enriched his memory with phrases and figures which give a certain peculiarity to his style and are among the sources of its authority. Like those other great literary physicians, Rabelais, Servetus, and Locke, he sharpened his intelligence on the grindstone of observable fact, till he was able to cut through some of the metaphysical growths that encumbered his age. Like Sir Thomas Browne, he enlarged the scope of his imagination—though his was less vigorous than the English physician's—by doubling the point of view, so that he habitually beheld two worlds. He saw mankind henceforth on the physical, even the physiological side, as well as on the side of intellect and spirit. His training in observation and exact analysis was the more valuable to him because many years of his literary experience were to be spent in conflict with an influence which exalted vagueness into a virtue, overestimated the poetic and philosophical value of subjective feeling, and attempted to found a new literature on the shifting sand of impressionism. Moreover, as a writer for the daily press, with every temptation to be superficial, he was deeply indebted to the physician's habit of thorough diagnosis.

In September, 1824, with a sharpness which may without exaggeration be thus expressed in a date, Sainte-Beuve's boyhood came to an end. His fund of vitality and native cheerfulness must have been very large to endure the forcing process to which he had been subjected. According to the statements of his contemporaries, and especially the more dubious evidence of his own imaginative works, in which he purposely colours his past with a sickly hue of melancholy, he was, at nineteen, a febrile, intense, self-devouring youth, rather lugubrious in appearance, ugly, awkward, shy, with rebellious passions unsubdued by principle or a strong sense of manly honour. On the other hand, he was extremely clever, possessed solid attainments and severe habits of mental discipline, and concealed under a veil of irony an eager yearning for sympathy. He was already an adept in the art of insinuation, but he loved truth. He was consumed with avidity to know, with curiosity to behold, with zeal to act.*

* A portrait of Sainte-Beuve engraved by Demary and printed in the *Galerie des Contemporains illustres*, in 1845, gives a notion of how he looked between boyhood and middle age. It is the face of a man whose senses and whose soul are alike hungry. The profile is sharp, the expression melancholy. The height of the forehead and the length and angle of the nose are unusual.

CHAPTER III

WITH THE ROMANTICISTS

HAVING persisted in writing on political subjects, Paul-François Dubois, who had been deposed from his chair in 1821, found himself, within three years, deprived of even his half-pay. He desired to express the views for which he had suffered, and at the suggestion of Pierre Leroux, a radical printer, he established an organ for them both and for the dissatisfied youth of France. His purpose was to preach civil and religious liberty—freedom of instruction, freedom of worship, freedom of the press; in other words, to sow the seeds of the revolt which overthrew the Bourbons in 1830. But under the laws existing in 1824 he could not venture upon his full programme. And so the first number of the *Globe* was issued, September 15, 1824, as a literary periodical. In his prospectus, Dubois declared that it was his purpose to respect French national taste while introducing the literary news, and thereby the intellectual life, of other countries. He knew well that if he could thus admit fresh currents of thought and enlarge the field of speculation,

the impulse would extend irresistibly to subjects which he was not allowed to discuss. His plan was like Fichte's when he lectured on philosophy in Berlin in order to fill the ranks of the volunteers against Napoleon.

Some of Sainte-Beuve's former teachers with whom he had kept in touch advised him to apply to Dubois for a position on this paper. Dubois has left an account of the momentous visit:

"I was ill, and the young man, seated at my bedside, depicted his disgust with life and yet the necessity of taking a hand in life's business, his literary hopes and the impossibility of realising them. I encouraged him, and, not wishing to plunge him into the hazardous career of journalism, I preached loyalty to his profession of medicine, showing him that he could still dedicate many hours, for a long time at least, to the worship of literature, as of a secret divinity. From one confidence to another, the Joseph Delorme whom we learned to know later threw himself open to me: this young soul was devoured by a sombre melancholy, a sensual love of pleasure, low in its desires, an imagination stirred by the lyrical fervour of the great poets, French and foreign, all borne along in the same movement, and finally the teachings of Helvétius and Hobbes. With my deistical philosophy, drawn from Rousseau and favourable to optimism and Christian resignation, I was touched. And I too touched this pupil who was confessing to his old master. I then proposed to him that he should make trial of himself in the *Globe* and seek relief there from his black thoughts, and exercise a talent which needed room, but advised him not to give up medicine and his hospital yet. . . . I asked him to write geographical sketches, literary and picturesque, but not elaborate, following the

daily events of the Greek war of independence, which the great daily papers were reporting, but which the *Globe*, because of its purely literary character, could not report."

Thus began "the best and most fruitful years" of Sainte-Beuve's life, of which he says, "In them I acquired what I have since only extended and paid out, for the inward man is never renewed." Many young literary men, among them Charles de Rémusat, Prosper Mérimée, J.-J. Ampère, Thiers, Guizot, and Villemain, were soon connected with the *Globe*.

Sainte-Beuve's first article was a description of Samos, printed October 10. It was followed by an account of the island of Ipsara, but his third contribution was a book-review. He wrote about Chios, Lesbos, and Candia, the last of these geographical sketches appearing in January, 1825. In the meanwhile he had contributed an equal number of reviews. In 1825 he appeared about twenty times in the *Globe*, reviewing principally books of travel and memoirs relating to the French Revolution. Thus he quickly found his level, on ground familiar to him. Part of his reward was the pleasure of seeing his name attached to some of these articles. A number of them, and one printed even so far back as November, 1824, were deemed fit for republication in the *Premiers Lundis*, many years later. Of special

importance, because of its probable relation to his future, is the task which appears to have occupied his whole attention in October, November, and December, 1825. This is a review, in three instalments, of the *Historical and Literary Visit to England and Scotland* (*Voyage historique et littéraire en Angleterre et en Écosse*), by Amédée Pichot. The niche that Sainte-Beuve, after all, made for himself among minor French poets, the place he could call his own in imaginative literature, was not wide, but peculiar. He became the first French author of familiar poetry which was at the same time serious—poetry, that is, of common life. He followed the example of Cowper, Thomson, Crabbe, and Wordsworth. Pichot's work treats, among other subjects, of the so-called Lake School of poets, and in his review Sainte-Beuve enlarges on this topic, unfolding a poetic theory until then almost unheard of in France, and showing that he appreciated it. It was a mark of singular open-mindedness and most uncommon critical grasp to be able, in France and in 1825, to write as follows:

"While our descriptive poets have never gone below the surface of things, and in their cold and elegant paintings have made a faithful but monotonous copy of inanimate nature, an attempt has been made in England to associate with such pictures the impressions to which they give rise and to enliven them with a reflection of human sentiment."

A newspaper conducted under the eye of the censor and in nominal conformity to press regulations, while actually engaged in propagating subversive doctrines, would naturally have to be managed by one will. To be attached to the *Globe* implied general conformity to the views of Dubois. The paper, which was issued at first three times a week, then twice a week, and finally, from February, 1830, as a daily, was changed cautiously and gradually to a broader basis, including literature and art and at last politics, openly treated. It had a distinct tone. It represented a certain direction of thought in almost every field, and there was remarkable solidarity of opinion among its contributors. The *Globe* office was in fact a liberal club, and it became also a school, which set a stamp upon its members. "Your work," wrote Sainte-Beuve to Dubois in 1843, "was great and admirable, if it be measured by its direct and effective influence on thinking men."

Although the *Globe* represented at first a group rather than a party, a group of "intellectuals" who could not yet be regarded as practical politicians, it served as a rallying-point for the scattered forces of opposition. Its tone was definite and consistent. It spoke clearly in regard to the difficulty that troubled many liberals, namely, the relation of

Napoleon to the Revolution. If men could be brought to regard Napoleon constantly and in every aspect as an enemy of the Revolution, and not as its necessary outcome, their pathway to a confident liberalism would be made much easier. The *Globe* repudiated Napoleon, and pointed out, upon every occasion, the great benefits of the Revolution, which were not generally acknowledged even by those who most profited by them. It professed content with constitutional monarchy, and showed all the less hesitation on that account in criticising, whenever it dared, the arbitrary and restrictive acts of the Restoration government. One of the principal reasons for admitting so much comment on foreign literature was Dubois's enthusiasm for the liberal features of English public life, and his hope that his countrymen, by studying them, might become dissatisfied with the arrested development of progress in France. The *Globe* upheld the doctrine of the rights of man, was hostile, of course, to the alliance between Catholicism and the State, and unreservedly denounced the Jesuits. Yet its editors were careful to explain that they were not of the school of Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, and Helvétius. They accepted the result of eighteenth century philosophy—emancipation from the theory of the divine

right of kings and from spiritual authority derived from a doctrine of supernatural revelation. They desired to see old abuses swept away. But they demanded a clean slate only in order to write upon it, in simpler letters, the words of a new covenant. They wished it to be understood that theirs was a constructive policy. They would begin where Voltaire ended, and lay the basis of a really free commonwealth. A test of their consistency presented itself in the religious question. Unbelievers themselves, yet favouring absolute freedom in matters of faith and worship, what should they say to the Church when it set itself deliberately to thwart their plans? They had to deal here with a very active and conscious opposition. Not only were they battling against the inertia of a world-power which was settling again in its old entrenchments whence it had been dislodged for a short time after centuries of possession, but against the enthusiasm of the Catholic vindication so eloquently proclaimed by Chateaubriand; and there was the attractive appeal of Gallicanism—a national Church, orthodox and apostolic, but free from papal domination; and there was Protestantism, as uncompromising in its supernaturalism as Rome herself. The editors of the *Globe* showed a willingness to consider religious

questions historically and comparatively, with fairness and even with sympathy, constantly reminding themselves that true liberalism is tolerant; though against the interference of the Church with politics they fought stubbornly, and as openly as the law allowed.

To thorough-going radicals it seemed that the *Globe* was too hospitable to supernaturalism, too reticent in regard to a political situation which it disapproved—too eclectic, in short. Sainte-Beuve tells us, many years later, that although he underwent the discipline of the *Globe*, he preserved the integrity of his own opinions. The political doctrines of the *Globe* certainly were no strain to him, for on the whole he was himself an opportunist, willing to accept less in practice than he desired in theory, and generally inclined to work with the conservatives, though pulling always in the direction of liberalism. He shared to the full the strongest passion of his colleagues, their hatred of clericalism, but his philosophical position was narrower and firmer than theirs.

Sainte-Beuve's contributions to the *Globe* in 1826, which have nearly all been republished in the *Premiers Lundis*, consisted of about a dozen book-reviews, half of them dealing with the Revolutionary period. "My first articles that were at all noteworthy," he wrote, many

years later, "were on the first volumes of the *History of the Revolution* by M. Thiers and on the *Tableau* of the same period by M. Mignet." He was following Dubois's advice, and freeing his mind on the subject which at that time probably oppressed him most. No man with his genius for psychological analysis and his desire to find a rational basis for the conduct of life could work among the memoirs of the Revolutionary time without being drawn into one of three courses: to fling himself in disgust on the bosom of a mystical philosophy, to give up all attempt to find satisfaction, or to hold fast, with undaunted optimism, to the doctrines of political equality, social progress, and natural religion which animated the men of 1789. Dubois had, it seems, possessed the strength of character, and, perhaps it would be fair to add, the inflexibility of mind, to pursue the third course. But Sainte-Beuve was precisely the man to be attracted by all three possibilities and remain in unstable equilibrium. Especially in studying private life during the Revolution, he was observing human nature and the natural laws that govern it, as laid bare by the removal of artificial restraints. What he saw, taken in connection with his medical studies, confirmed his materialism and his distrust of all intellectual methods

save the inductive, and at the same time tended to throw him, for relief, consolation, and repose, toward the arms of unreasoning acquiescence in spiritual authority. Even thus early in life he developed the habit of travelling all around any subject, however great, upon which he wrote. His poetical fervour forbade him to remain content with analysis. He was forced to try to realise, to imagine, to reconstruct the states of mind of two typical men, one a Voltairian, the other a traditional Christian, both of them subject to the influence of the Revolution. And since these two men really existed in him, and, moreover, since the French Revolution, in a broad sense, had really never ended, he spent his life, for many years, in alternating moods.

It was through Dubois that the young journalist found his way into a new circle of friends and a new field of activity. Sainte-Beuve's relation to the Romantic movement has too often been misunderstood. He has been regarded merely as a disciple. His poetical achievement has naturally been overshadowed by that of Hugo and that of Musset; its peculiar quality and aims, however, ought to give it a certain lustre of its own. His value as an adviser of the school has never been sufficiently recognised. Difficulties of a personal nature,

the unbridled ardour of those whom he could have helped, and perhaps also some envy and chagrin on his part when he witnessed their amazing success, shortened the period of his intimacy with the Romantic poets; but for some years, the most decisive years, he was, next to Hugo, the most influential member of the group.

"The *Globe*," wrote Dubois, "professed to be Romantic, or rather liberal, in poetry and literature generally, hostile to the false worship of the classics of the last century who still survived, and who neither knew nor comprehended at bottom either Greece or the great and original seventeenth century imitations of Greece. We defended free-trade among all literatures and the right of our young poets to make innovations, but our position was moderate and discreet, for we retained the pure veneration for antiquity which our severe studies had given us, and the tradition of national taste. Lamartine and Béranger realised our hopes in lyric poetry. Hugo and his young friends pleased us by their vagaries, the chief of the Cénacle especially. The true 'Globists', that is to say, those educated at the École Normale, and the sure and delicate taste of M. de Rémusat, took offence at their make-believe Oriental splendour and their aiming at the sublime and falling into the ridiculous."

He added that the more severe among his colleagues seemed to him rather unjust in their treatment of Hugo.

So far as concerns the effect of foreign literature on Sainte-Beuve, in preparing him to become an avowed Romantic, too much em-

phasis cannot be laid upon his knowledge of Wordsworth. This was, as it were, his private possession, which he used for the common good. In other respects his preparation was less peculiar. He of course read Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, a book in which the love and woe of a young man are depicted so seriously, with such complete absence of irony, and so entirely without symbolism or an attempt to generalise, that Werther appeared to other young men as a real person. Werther interpreted to them their love of loving, their secret protest against restraint, their melancholy when desire is appeased and no occupation absorbs their thoughts, and finally their disillusion and disgust with themselves. *The Sorrows of Werther* is no more Romantic, perhaps, than *Hamlet* or the *Confessions* of Augustine—is, indeed, a far less agonising and poignant book than either of these. Its peculiarity lies in the individualism of Werther, that is, speaking plainly, his selfishness. Strip off the purple velvet, the apparel of mystery and mourning, and you have left, in *The Sorrows of Werther*, only a solemn idealisation of selfishness. Byron also, to whom everybody listened, was singing a song, grateful to human ears, in praise of selfish self-assertion. Robust and seemingly hearty was his voice, audacious and

seemingly free his bearing. And although neither Byron nor the young Goethe possessed the sincerity of Rousseau, who preached community of privilege, and universal duty, nevertheless their appeal accorded with his cry for liberty. And it harmonised even more exactly with the sentimentalism of Chateaubriand, who had taken Rousseau's comparatively open *largo* and transposed it into an incantation full of sharps and flats. Some of Sainte-Beuve's poems were written before 1827, before he met Victor Hugo and was introduced to the circle called the Cénacle, which assembled at Hugo's house. They are distinctly related, in one respect, to such works as *Manfred* and *Werther* and Chateaubriand's *René;* they lay bare to the world the character, the desires, the yearnings, the bitter disappointments, of a self-absorbed youth; they assert the claims of personality; they question and regret, nay, even defy and denounce, the insistent demands of society; man, they seem to say, was not made for society, but society for man.

Sainte-Beuve, as we have seen, became acquainted at least as early as 1825 with the poetical theory of Wordsworth. It was not long before he gave proof of knowing Wordsworth's poetry, too, and it is extremely likely

that he read a good deal of Wordsworth and Cowper, and even some of Crabbe, during the three months he spent writing his three articles on Pichot's *Visit*. He had devoted a large part of his vacation-time at Boulogne to the study of English. It was a corollary of Wordsworth's theory of the poetic value of common objects and incidents—Wordsworth's theory, though practised before him by Cowper and Burns and independently by Crabbe—that the language of ordinary life was sufficient for the poetic interpretation of these common objects and incidents. It would be overlooking the popular songs of Germany, the fables of La Fontaine, and even a famous lesson taught expressly by Molière, to assert that the views on poetic diction which Sainte-Beuve received from his English reading were wholly new to him. Still, he had never before seen them so abundantly and beautifully illustrated; he was convinced of their value; he became an enthusiastic student of Wordsworth; and the one distinction which remains his among poets is to have been the first and perhaps the most undeviating writer of serious familiar poetry in the French language. It has generally been taken for granted that he did less for Hugo, Musset, and Vigny than they did for him. In much he was really their master. His acquaint-

ance with books, and especially with the tendencies of thought in foreign countries, was greater than theirs. He was unexcelled in quickness of apprehension. When we consider the relatively conventional diction of Hugo before he knew Sainte-Beuve, when we note that Sainte-Beuve's chief contribution to the polemics of Romanticism was a treatise on sixteenth century poetry, and then remember that he entered upon this task before he met Hugo, but after he had grasped the Wordsworthian theory and learned to admire and imitate Wordsworth's poems, it seems plain that he deserves more credit than he has hitherto received for priority in this matter of poetic diction.

These three features, then, which were to be so marked in nineteenth century literature and are generally associated with Romanticism—glorification of the individual, the perception of poetic value in common objects and incidents, and the enlargement of poetic diction so as to include much of the language of ordinary life—were approved by Sainte-Beuve before his connection with Hugo and the other Romantic poets.

This connection began in January, 1827. In the preceding November the *Globe* had printed several long extracts from Hugo's volume of

Odes and Ballades, with a few lines of introduction by Dubois, which included the following statement:

> "We have often commented severely on the faults of this young poet, his uncultured disdain for the French language, his fondness for incoherent images, the rudeness of his rhythm, and, worst of all, the affectation of strangeness and disorder in his ideas. Yet it must be admitted, whatever displeasure one experiences in reading these compositions, they strike the imagination; it is delirium, if you will, but the delirium of a poet."

This temperate and almost condescending tone was characteristic of the *Globe;* and indeed Dubois was more appreciative than many of his colleagues. The ardour of the young poets flamed in vain upon the cool judgment of men trained as they were in ancient literature and permeated with respect for the French classics. To these critics, more even than to the less intellectual public, the excesses of the new school were repulsive. Yet, in principle, the *Globe* was bound to admire certain qualities which were conspicuous in the innovators: their willingness to learn from foreign literatures; their repudiation of the lifeless late Classicism that followed the real Classicism, so full of vigour and originality; and also their efforts to enlarge the range of poetic subjects and to freshen poetic diction. But the great Romantic poet, in 1826, was chanting the

praises of Monarchy and the Church! And on this account, even more than by his literary excesses, he failed to win the unqualified support of the *Globe*.

Men to whom logical precision was even more precious than it was to Sainte-Beuve, men who could not rest content with an indefinite conception, were already, as early as 1825, attempting to define the new tendency in art and conduct which was very generally perceived. Its chronological aspect, but only that, was noted by Stendhal when he declared Romanticism to be "the art of presenting to people literary works which in the present state of their habits and beliefs are capable of giving them the greatest possible pleasure, whereas Classicism offers them the literature which was most pleasant to their great-grandfathers", a statement which Deschanel, years later, merely repeated when he said Classicism was the Romanticism of yesterday and Romanticism the Classicism of to-morrow. Other logical spirits, considering the subject-matter to which so many writers in the first half of the nineteenth century had recourse, have fastened their attention upon that, and have told us that Romanticism means a turning away from Greek and Roman antiquity to the Middle Ages as a source of material for art.

Others, looking more deeply, indeed, but still seeing only part of the question, have defined Romanticism as the exaltation of the Ego. Some, regarding neither the matter nor the spirit, but only the means of expression, have insisted that Romanticism is an effort to enlarge and enrich the vocabulary of poetry.

Sainte-Beuve, as if he foresaw all these possible interpretations, touched lightly on the many sides of the subject, without committing himself to a final and general statement, and when he once attempted to answer the question, "What is a Classic?" he included all sound, useful, and beautiful work, of whatever school. In the early days of the *Globe*, Lamartine and even Béranger were accounted Romantics, and of course Hugo and Vigny. So wide was the range of definition, expressed or unexpressed, so vague and fluctuating were the literary sympathies of even the staff of the *Globe*, who in other respects were unanimous, that we find great diversity of opinion among them as to the merits of these writers. Dubois, as the final arbiter, upheld the *Globe's* tradition of liberality, and Sainte-Beuve, catholic in taste and cautious in judgment, very young, and susceptible to fresh impressions, was selected by his chief to review Hugo's *Odes and Ballades*. His own poetical ambi-

tions—he was already composing the pieces which were to appear under the name of Joseph Delorme—inclined him to sympathise with an innovator, and he was the more disposed to appreciate Hugo's exuberance and facility because his own rivulet of verse trickled somewhat scantily. His vein was deep; Hugo's was external. His muse loved quietness and intimate details; Hugo's was eloquent, theatrical, fond of generalities and big phrases. Yet he was prepared to feel for Hugo the admiration which often draws sensitive and intelligent spirits towards more robust though less refined natures. Moreover, he would not be easily shocked by the license Hugo permitted himself to take with French idiom and versification, even in a work so comparatively regular as the *Odes and Ballades;* Marot, Ronsard, Du Bellay, and other sixteenth century poets had used still greater freedom, and Sainte-Beuve, in 1826, was already imbued with their spirit. He had undertaken to compete for a prize offered by the Academy for a "Discourse on the History of the French Language and Literature from the Beginnings of the Sixteenth Century down to 1610". The results of his studies were given to the *Globe* in a series of articles in 1827, and published in July, 1828, under the title, *Historical*

and Critical Account of French Poetry and the French Drama in the Sixteenth Century, to which he added a volume of selections from Ronsard. The preparation for this task must have occupied many months.

His review of the *Odes and Ballades* appeared in the *Globe* of January 2 and 9, 1827. Many years later he learned with satisfaction that these articles, written when he was barely twenty-three years old, had attracted the notice of Goethe. On the whole, they are favourable; this is what caught Goethe's attention. Praise from such a quarter as the *Globe*, insight, sympathy, appreciation, were sufficiently novel, and no doubt very agreeable to the innovator. But what strikes one most on reading them now is the discrimination with which the praise is bestowed and the sensible advice with which it is accompanied. A critic surveying the whole career of Victor Hugo would hardly be able to put his finger more accurately on the poet's characteristic weaknesses and excesses than Sainte-Beuve did from the symptoms before him in December, 1826. It is an acute diagnosis. He begins with a brief account of the new school, whom he describes as champions of by-gone ages, yet filled with modern affections, innovators even while evoking the past, organising around two or three funda-

mental ideas a complete system of poetry formed of Platonism in love, Christianity in mythology, royalism in politics. "Political intention," he says, "has seemed to them in general an essential part of every literary composition, since, according to M. Hugo, the history of mankind is not poetical except as viewed from the high standpoint of monarchical ideas and religious beliefs." He proves that he is not ignorant of Hugo's private history, in a singularly glowing, not to say perfervid passage: "M. Hugo owed his astonishing precocity to the temper of his soul and the circumstances of his tenderest years. Born amid camps, bred among our warriors, he had early in life followed our banners all over Europe." He notes on every page of the first volume of odes "a violent hatred of the Revolution, an exalted adoration of monarchical memories, a delirious conviction, more greedy for the martyr's palm than for the poet's laurel, and, to paint these fiery sentiments, a fiery style, glittering with images, bounding with harmony; bad taste, from being grandiose and rude, but never from meanness or calculation". He expresses his disgust with Hugo's occasional lapses into the horrible and ugly, "which betray a certain disorder of his imagination against which French taste revolts".

He falls into the excess to which Hugo's admirers were strangely prone, in the following amusing passage:

"Imagine to your heart's content all that is most pure in love, most chaste in wedlock, most sacred in the union of souls under the eye of God; dream, in a word, of voluptuous pleasure ravished from heaven on the wings of prayer, and you will have imagined nothing which M. Hugo does not attain and efface in the delicious pieces entitled *Encore à toi* and *Son Nom;* merely to mention them is almost to tarnish their chaste and fragile bloom."

Even the circumspect Sainte-Beuve, and not merely in his youth, lapsed occasionally into this surprising style. He calls attention to Hugo's abuse of sharp and unnatural contrasts, his tedious pursuit of a fine conception even when it has escaped him irretrievably, his perilous fondness for mere force. He was yet to discover Hugo's enormous egoism, but, apart from that, we possess in these two articles a remarkable analysis of the poet's defects, together with a hearty acknowledgment of his power.

"I did not know Victor Hugo at all," he tells us, in an autobiographical sketch found among his papers after his death. "Without our being aware of it, we lived near each other in the Rue Vaugirard, he at No. 90 and I at No. 94. He came to thank me for the articles, but did not find me. The next day, or the day after, I went to his house and found him

at lunch. . . . My initiation into the Romantic school of the poets began that day. I had been rather unsympathetic until then, because of their royalism and mysticism, which I did not share. I had even had a severe article in the *Globe* on M. de Vigny's *Cinq-Mars*, on the falsity of its historical side." He was captivated by Victor Hugo's forceful personality; Madame Hugo charmed him; the company of young poets who frequented Hugo's house presented an agreeable contrast with the severe men with whom he had hitherto been associated. Their high spirits, the confidence and ardour with which they discoursed on their theories of poetry, were in accord with his own youthfulness. Perhaps he brought more than the circle had to offer him. He brought his advanced and peculiar views on poetic art, his extensive acquaintance with the sixteenth century, that other age of experiment and innovation, and his own unpublished verse.

"The few verses that I had made," he tells us, "were of a quite intimate character, and showed my inexperience in their form and style. I had kept them to myself, not having any real judge near me. The conversation of Victor Hugo threw light upon the art, and revealed to me, also, the secrets of the trade, the finger-exercises, if I may so speak, of the new method. I soon opened my heart to him. A happy chance brought it to pass that when I left the Rue de Vaugirard the next spring and

went to live at No. 19, Rue Notre Dame des Champs, Victor Hugo, leaving his house in the Rue de Vaugirard, came likewise to live in that same street, which was then quite rural, at No. 11. Our relations as neighbours soon turned to friendship, and every day, after that, I felt myself drifting, willingly enough, from the rather bare and frowning coast of the *Globe* towards the enchanted isle of poesy. . . . Amid his thanks and praise for the manner in which I had appreciated his collection, Hugo took occasion to unfold to me his views and his method of writing poetry, some of his secrets of rhythm and colour. I had already been composing verse, but for myself alone and without making any show, and I quickly seized the new ideas, which I now heard for the first time and which instantly threw light on style and versification. Since I was already busy with our old poets of the sixteenth century, I was prepared to apply what I learned and to find for myself arguments in support of it. My second visit completed my conversion and initiated me into some of the reforms of the new school. Going home, I chose some of my verses and sent them to Victor Hugo. I had not ventured to show them to any one before, for I felt that my masters on the *Globe*, who really were my masters in history and philosophy, were not at all my masters in what concerns elegiac poetry. Hugo replied to me at once, praising my verses, while indicating, by the very points he commended, wherein my work was weak. I was won over, that day, to that branch of the Romantic school of which he was the head."

Sainte-Beuve was still, however, continuing his medical studies and more closely engaged than ever in writing for the *Globe*. But he felt that his "masters" were not so closely in touch with the century as his new friends. He was restive in the tight harness of their rationalism,

their policy of slowly enlightening the public, of slowly undermining abuses, of waiting for the grand opportunity which might never come. It can be imagined with what sort of grimace, whether of repugnance or resignation, he accepted the Catholicism of his new acquaintances. Probably he looked no further when he thought he had discovered that "Christian mythology" was advantageous to poetic composition. They were enthusiastic monarchists, and although he subsequently tried, not without effect, to "deroyalise" them, he was able at first, with no great trouble, to put up with their politics for the sake of the social advantages that came thus within his reach. What really won him was their youth, their overflowing poetical activity, and, perhaps most of all, the attractions of Madame Hugo, for whom he conceived a melancholy passion. Then, as always, he felt only the negative side of Christianity, its restrictive side, its opposition especially to fleshly lusts that war against the soul. If we may judge from the indirect confessions which he made, or pretended to make, in his poems and his novel, he would have had much to renounce in accepting Christianity, and felt unable to give up a life of licentious pleasure. Religious sentiment, however, he was charmed to experience.

His *Historical and Critical Account*, dedicated to Dubois, was published in 1828, with a preface in which he states that at first he thought only of complying with the programme of the Academy, which invited a discourse on the French language and literature in the sixteenth century.

"But," he continues, "before writing a discourse on the history of our literature in that period, I felt the need of knowing that literature. I commenced, naturally, with the poetry, and the subject seemed to me so interesting and fertile that I never got beyond it. This being the case, I was obliged to give up competing, and I did so the more resignedly as the new results, which were most important in my opinion, would have appeared too audacious if set forth without a full apparatus of proofs and developments. Some parts of this work have already been inserted in the *Globe*. . . . I have revised and expanded them and fitted them into the rest of the book. In particular, I have lost no opportunity to connect these studies of the sixteenth century with the literary and poetical questions which are being agitated in our own."

The work is divided into two parts, one dealing with poetry, the other with the drama. It begins with a sketch of French poetry before the sixteenth century, and includes an analysis of Du Bellay's *Defence and Illustration of the French Language* (*Défense et Illustration de la Langue française*) and copious quotations from sixteenth century poets. It is a complex and elaborate study. The style is not of Sainte-

Beuve's best; it is too ornate. But considering that he was working in an almost unbroken field, his achievement is remarkable. We need not allow for his youth. He was already a learned man and a skilled writer, neither making apologies nor expecting consideration. Great wealth of allusion and abundance of general views are here displayed, though we miss the characteristic clearness and the living articulate speech of his later compositions. The polemical purpose of the book is not too prominent. He is moderate, even timid, in his claims. What seemed to him audacious estimates of Du Bellay and Ronsard are now generally accepted. We are able, without astonishment, to perceive at once more naturalness in the lyrics of Du Bellay and Ronsard, and an equally refined art, as compared with corresponding poems of the seventeenth century. To venture such a suggestion in 1828 was very bold.

There are two defects in Sainte-Beuve's treatise which have stood in the way of its general usefulness and make it distinctly inferior to, let us say, the *History of French Literature in the Middle Ages*, by Gaston Paris. One is the fact that the affluence of matter and of opinions fills up the valleys to the level of the hills, so that the landscape presents too

few eminences and too little gradation of view. The reader is bewildered by the number of persons and books cited, by the numerous conclusions drawn, by the frequent appeals to his admiration. After all, the world persists in remembering two exquisite sonnets of Du Bellay and two or three short pieces of Ronsard, and forgetting almost everything else that emanated from the Pléiade. Another defect is more fundamental, because due to Sainte-Beuve's mental constitution: the book is not so much a single work as a series of portraits. It is full of fresh beginnings and retouches. This is, in a measure, true of *Port-Royal* also. Sainte-Beuve was destined to be the author of the *Causeries du Lundi* and the *Nouveaux Lundis*. They are his typical productions, his masterpieces, his final flowering. In all the work he performed before or apart from these, he falls short of perfect achievement, and at the same time reveals embryonic features, rudimentary beginnings, of his characteristic manner.

It was a useful service to recall to public attention the fact that there was excellent French poetry before Malherbe and Boileau, and the even less acknowledged fact that the tragedy of Corneille and Racine and the comedy of Molière were developed out of a native

French drama which flourished in the sixteenth century. In particular, his researches in the versification and poetic diction of the elder poets brought a welcome store of metrical forms and strong idioms to the poets of his own day, who were stretching their invention for permissible novelties. The opulence of phrase, the audacity in rhyming, the breadth of imagery for which Ronsard had been ridiculed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were now vindicated, and in turn gave authority to the Romanticists; for as Sainte-Beuve remarked, in the conclusion of his book, "In shaking off the yoke of the last two centuries, the new French school has felt a natural desire to know what has been done in the past and to seek in our old literature something national to which it could attach itself."

This work came as a welcome support to Hugo and his friends. It demonstrated that their supposed innovations were not all without precedent. It added the dignity of scholarship to the glories of art. Sainte-Beuve was now, in all but his heart of hearts, a Romanticist. His new friends received him cordially as a valuable recruit, and he did good service. The domestic circle of the Hugos, however, held him as much as the literary circle known as the Cénacle. He never surrendered himself

to any literary school or movement. "I have," he declared, "gone through many a metamorphosis. I began frankly and crudely with the most extreme phase of eighteenth century thought, with Tracy, Daunou, Lamarck, and physiology; that is my real foundation. Thence I passed through the doctrinaire and psychological school of the *Globe*, though with reservations and not identifying myself with it. Thence I went over to poetical Romanticism and Victor Hugo's group, and here it looked as if I had lost myself."

Yet even in the flush of his new enthusiasm, when a flattering perspective of friendship was opening before him, the young critic ventured to offer technical advice to the already famous poet. In a letter to Hugo, written February 13, 1827, and printed for the first time in 1904, he pulled to pieces the "tragi-comedy", as he called *Cromwell*, which he had heard read the day before. And five or six days before the first night of *Hernani*, when Hugo's house was an advertising bureau and Hugo's other friends were running to and fro in joyful excitement, Sainte-Beuve coolly wrote to the poet that he did not believe in trying to promote the adoration of art in a public place, adding prophetically: "When you have attained your end, art will suffer; your heritage will be vacant,

and you will have been only a brilliant and sublime episode, astonishing chiefly to your contemporaries."

The volume which he published in April, 1829, *Life, Poems, and Thoughts of Joseph Delorme* (*Vie, Poésies, et Pensées de Joseph Delorme*), was not inspired by his new connection, but by independent and antecedent experiences, though its final shape and much of its contents were no doubt due to his acquaintance with Hugo. It was the chamber in which he had accumulated a secret store of intimate memories, brief glimpses of beauty, observations too fragile to be expressed in prose, gloom, bitterness, desire, impatience, the joys and torments of his youth. Many of the poems were written to illustrate the theory of poetry which, with his quick apprehension, he had learned from his English reading. These, because of their novelty, possess considerable interest. Their poetical merit is not great, the imagery being intricate rather than rich, curious rather than natural, and the versification jejune; but as examples of critical insight and prophetic boldness they are remarkable. The volume contains a *Life* of the supposed author, Joseph Delorme, who is a falsified Sainte-Beuve, consumptive, melancholy, misunderstood, gnawed by passion; about sixty

pieces of verse, including free translations from Wordsworth, Keats, Kirke White, and Schiller; and a number of detached *Thoughts* in prose, which are, in their kind, superior to the poems, being condensed essays in criticism, veritable diamonds for brilliancy and hardness. In the poems there are two chief strains, which refuse to mingle: one a strain of minute description of familiar things considered with reference to their influence upon the emotions, the other purely voluptuous. The former shows his endeavour to imitate Wordsworth, and his abysmal inferiority to him in elevation of soul, musical speech, and magical power to penetrate nature. The voluptuous strain is pedantic and forced. The only successful attempts are in a third strain, certain easy, personal epistles in verse in the sound, old-fashioned French manner. Of these, *Mes Livres*, a delightful account of his book-hunting expeditions, is perhaps the best example. The volume has much critical value. His desire to introduce a new species of poetry into France was not altogether vain. Other poets, including François Coppée, have given it an honourable though still somewhat feeble and exotic existence. M. Anatole France is perhaps not unjust when he says: "We love poetry in France, but we love it after a fashion of our own; we insist that it shall be eloquent,

and are inclined not to require that it shall be poetic."

It is probable that Hugo, in advancing from the showiness of much of his work in the *Odes and Ballades* to the more genuine excellence of the poetry he published during the next few years, was affected by Sainte-Beuve's precepts, if not by his example. Most people still do not believe that common men and women, in ordinary situations, can be made the subjects of poetry. Distinguished persons or very humble persons, such as beggars, gipsies, or shepherds, they are willing to admit to this privilege, but they would debar the average artisan; shopkeeper, and professional man; and while they are favourable to milkmaids and ladies of title, the familiar housewife or sempstress or factory-girl is not supposed to merit attention of this kind. Sainte-Beuve made a valiant attempt to break down this false tradition. As a critic, as a man who knew how to read and to teach others to read, he was here doing useful work. As a poet he was not able to charm us with lines of irresistible beauty, till

> "with an eye made quiet by the power
> Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
> We see into the life of things,"

and perceive that beauty resides not chiefly in unusual distinctions conferred by human con-

sent, but in deeper and more general qualities. To abstract the universal from the particular, to invest common objects with the light of setting suns, to reveal beauty where to prosaic eyes it does not seem to exist, is the supreme task of poetry and the supreme test of a poet. The uncertain and mechanical touch of the young experimenter was quite unfit to perform the wonder he had seen Wordsworth perform. Indeed, a man could scarcely have been worse provided with what was necessary, and late in life he admitted that the fault was in him, not in his theory, because his heart was not sufficiently pure nor his life sufficiently simple. It almost seems as if Edward Caird had Sainte-Beuve's failure in mind when he wrote:

"This feat of 'widening nature without going beyond it' [Schiller's phrase for the poetic process] cannot be achieved by one in whom the division of man's higher and lower nature has produced the sense of an irreconcilable breach between the two, or in whose eyes their unity has been reduced to a mere ideal. Poetic genius must live in fruition, not in aspiration—must be at peace and not at war with the world; it must be able to see good in the heart of evil; it must grasp as attained what others see only as a distant hope. The poet cannot be one who has had to trample upon his natural life in order to make room for moral freedom, or one who has lost the vividness of the sensuous present in order to grasp at an idea. He must remain at one with himself as in happy childhood, and maintain an unbroken life in spite of all fightings within and contradictions without."

Joseph Delorme is a true successor to Werther, René, and Benjamin Constant's Adolphe. He is sentimental, sensual, unhappy, ill-conditioned. The *Life*, many of the *Poems*, and some of the *Thoughts*, though constituting a confession, have only very dubious biographical value. Their publication was prompted by a peculiarly morbid vanity, a desire to attract the sympathy of Madame Hugo. However much we may distrust the self-portrayal, there can be no doubt that this was its purpose, in part. It is hard to understand how he could have expected to shine in these sad feathers. He was determined to have his name connected with that of Madame Hugo. It is not necessary, nor indeed possible, to determine how much weight to attach to his pretensions. He purposely laid false scents. He carefully prepared a grand mystification. It would be impertinent to inquire further into the matter, were not his relations with the Romantic school and the bias of his criticism in regard to several of his contemporaries, Hugo most of all, determined in large measure by his infatuation and the singular way in which he retreated from an absurd position. He taxed his ingenuity to draw attention to his woes, and *Joseph Delorme* did arouse a temporary curiosity. Then, in March, 1830, he published a second

volume of verse, *Les Consolations*, from which the public was expected to infer that he had not sued in vain. His novel, *Volupté*, was written in the same mood. Much peevish whining, the soreness of wounded vanity, a brooding and disordered covetousness, a shameless ignorance of which no one but a pedant could be capable, a wanton and unmanly boastfulness, and a subtle dissimulation, finally, by which actual and fictitious are blurred and rubbed together—this is the nature of Sainte-Beuve's confession. The personal note in these productions rings false. Their author regarded them with endless complacency, and kept them before his public by frequent references. More, perhaps, than any other man, he realised that nothing human is so lasting as poetic fame, and he bent himself to acquire "that name which honoureth most and most endureth."

But his labour was in vain. His persevering and elaborate efforts, by his quotations from his own poems, by allusions to Joseph Delorme and Amaury, the hero of *Volupté*, have merely exposed him to ridicule. This was his weak side. The brother of his friend Victor Pavie says:

"There came a time when his critical writings, the *Lundis* especially, and other things too, brought him the violent ill-will of many persons. He would hurry through

the streets, hugging the walls, and if you wanted to stop him it would never do to call, 'Good-day, Sainte-Beuve!' He would only walk the faster. But 'Good day, Delorme!' Ah, then he would come about, would smile and hold out his hand in the most friendly manner."

Many years later, when the original illusion had disappeared and even his vanity as a poet was dying for lack of nutriment, Sainte-Beuve remarked curtly: "In all my intellectual migrations I have never surrendered my will and my judgment, except for one moment in the circle of Victor Hugo and by the effect of a charm." In 1863 he wrote, with reference to this period when religious sentiment was so curiously blended in him with sensual desire: "I have taken on a little Christian mythology in my time. It has vanished. It was for me, like Leda's swan, a means of approaching the fair, a device for carrying on a tenderer love." In plain language, he was playing the hypocrite in an attempt to seduce the wife of his dearest friend.

Yet I confess it is hard to believe his own explicit declaration, in the face of his letters written to Barbe at the time. According to these, he was going through a spiritual crisis, which it might be supposed would have had an invigorating rather than a relaxing effect. We have, in the end, to choose between two theories: either that his conduct really was

hypocritical, as he so clearly intimated in 1863, or that a mystical fervour somehow lent colour to his plans of seduction. It is the latter view that he endeavoured for many years to impress upon his friends and even upon the public. In either case, the punishment he would have felt most keenly would have been the indifference of posterity, for a perverse and by no means uncommon kind of literary vanity was one of his motives. He was determined that his name should not perish, and scandal, he knew, was a good embalming salt. He was subtle, ambitious, and corrupt enough to map out such a course. But, as he so often groans, although he pursued the wrong way he was conscious of the better. And I cannot persuade myself that his letters to Barbe are wholly insincere. They show at least an instinct to cling to a good man's love.

On the 3d of January, 1829, he tells the young priest that he has finished a new volume, the *Life, Poems, and Thoughts of Joseph Delorme*, which is about to be printed; he will take it to him; "it is too profane to be sent from a distance without explanation or oral commentary; a most inoffensive book, nevertheless, you may be sure, to religion and monarchy; it is purely literary." Some cherished regard for old times of innocence made Sainte-Beuve

ever considerate of Barbe's feelings. He was unwilling to send him the book without preparing his mind for it, knowing what a man of clear principles and simple habits would think of it.

In a letter dated July 26, 1829, he tells Barbe, in that dissolving, non-committal style which he used when he touched on difficult subjects in their correspondence:

"I published a little book last winter. . . . You must read it some day. If a change has taken place in my life, it is rather in me than outside of me; and (I must not hesitate to tell you this, for it will probably please you) my ideas, which for a time tended strongly towards philosophism, and particularly a certain philosophism, that of the eighteenth century, have been greatly modified and have taken a turn of which I think I already perceive the good effects. No doubt we are still, on many points and especially on orthodoxy, not of the same opinion. I fear we are not. Yet we should understand each other better than ever on many questions which are probably the most essential in human life; and even where we might differ, it would, for my part, be because I could not go as far as you, rather than because I should go elsewhere or in a different direction. However, I must admit that if I have returned with sincere conviction and extreme good-will to ideas which I had laid aside before I felt their full scope and meaning, it has been less a theological or even philosophical step than an approach along the path of art and poetry. But what signifies the ladder, provided one rise and attain the end?"

It is almost cruel to read these phrases after the one about Leda's swan. But were they at

the time candid? Are these contorted and hedging explanations, this tender consideration for Barbe's feelings, this apology forced from an uneasy conscience—are these to stand against the outcry of an unguarded moment, late in life, when the battle was lost?

Of painful and almost dramatic interest is a letter to Barbe, dated May 30, 1830, in which the complexities of the writer's nature are definitely set forth:

"After many excesses in philosophy and in doubt, I have come to the point, I hope, of believing that there is no true repose here below save in religion, in the orthodox Catholic religion, practised with intelligence and submission. But alas! this is still, for me, merely the result of theory or inward experience, and I am far from making my life and all my actions conform to it as I ought. The perpetual instability of my circumstances, my want of money, my literary necessities—all this throws me upon a manner of life in which nothing is fixed and regulated, and after a few hours of good resolutions I soon fall back, a prey to outside impressions, or still worse, to the fluctuations of the passions, which no one, perhaps, has ever felt as cruelly as I. This it is that in my moments of semi-leisure I have tried to paint in my poetry, which I have always felt a modesty about letting you read, and which I beg you not to read until I have seen you and explained many things personally."

The striking omission in this list of difficulties is the perfidy he was already contemplating.

His courtship of the muse continued until the appearance of a third book of verse, *August*

Thoughts (*Pensées d'Août*), in 1837. This was received coldly by the public. It contained extreme instances of his poetical manner, bold ventures in support of his theory of common life as fit material for art, which possess, as such, very considerable importance in the history of French literature. Except Hugo himself, no one in the whole course of the century did so much as Sainte-Beuve, though more by precept and effort than by achievement, to widen the domain of French lyric poetry, to make French lyric poetry serious, to apply it closely to life. He had the courage, he who was not courageous, to continue the fight down to 1837. But his natural gift was perhaps not sufficient, or he was disheartened. At least, his attention was by that time irrevocably diverted to other activities.

He could show the way to others, but he lacked wings himself. At most he might have been, under very favourable circumstances, a French Crabbe, less natural, less weighty, less serious, less single-minded and convinced than the English realist, though easily more intellectual and more varied. But such an achievement could only have been the outgrowth of a character and education quite different from Sainte-Beuve's, more like his friend Barbe's, for instance, and this he realised. The pieces of his which will

be most readily acknowledged to have succeeded in their kind are his more trivial verse, which is often fashioned with a light, exquisite touch, reminding one of Pope. In reality, the care bestowed on these compositions was very great, and it was Sainte-Beuve's practice to be more precise and formal in proportion as his subject was either slight or commonplace. He thought fine workmanship, in an artificial and elaborate stanza, would purge away the dross of a subject-matter and bring out all its inherent lustre. And he was right, as these clever pieces prove. He had, if I may repeat the statement, three poetical veins: this thin and sparkling vein, wherein he found a few absolutely successful things; the vein of experiment in the manner of the English realists, his plain, sober pictures of ordinary life, in which he achieved a critical rather than an artistic success by demonstrating the possibility of such work in French; and thirdly, the vein of emotional self-disclosure, the vein of romantic or sentimental confession. This last was not a rich lode, and so he was at pains to charge it secretly with ore which he exhumed gloatingly, but which was really base metal.

The impulse that led him along this false route was partly ambition, partly sensuality. Many a worse man would have been restrained by

self-respect and good taste. And no man with a sense of honour would have permitted the *Book of Love* (*Livre d'Amour*) to see the light—a small collection of verses recording his passion for Madame Hugo and designed to implicate her. Some of them had already appeared in the volumes published during his lifetime. He left two hundred and five printed copies of this book to be distributed after his death. A virulent enemy of Sainte-Beuve was not too expressive when he declared that its purpose was "to leave on the life of this woman the gleaming and slimy trace which the passage of a snail leaves on a rose". Abominable in either case, whether or not the implication was unfounded, Sainte-Beuve's numerous innuendoes in regard to Madame Hugo are an indelible stain on his memory, and his infamy not only cost him his most precious friendships but crippled him in every high endeavour. The worst of it is that the itching vanity of authorship was his motive, his incredibly fatuous motive, for printing this dismal profession of dishonour. "In the inevitable hour," he boasts in one of the pieces, "when the dark tempest and the jealous gulf shall roll over our heads, a sealed bottle, vomited forth from the abyss, will save our two names, their close alliance, our double memory, aspiring after union."

The autobiographical value of the *Life of Joseph Delorme* would be very considerable if we might confidently accept it as a sketch of Sainte-Beuve's inner experiences. But it lies under grave suspicion. No doubt he sent it forth as his own moral portrait. In the *Consolations* fresh colour is laid on the picture, and in *Volupté* it is retouched, in the character of Amaury. The real Sainte-Beuve was infinitely more vigorous and versatile than the tearful youth of the portrait. The latter is merely the image of the author's paralysing doubts, his gnawing ambitions, his hankering desires.

We are conscious of the lapse of time and the decay of fashions when we read, with tedium and a sense of unreality, as we must, or perhaps with a more active feeling of repulsion, his long passages of religious analysis, especially in *Volupté*. There is much about heaven, salvation, submission, mystery, grace; the vocabulary of religious cant is exhausted; and under all this verbiage lies the thought that the chief function, even the whole function, of religion is to separate the soul of man from his mortal flesh, to take him out of the world, to save him by keeping him safe. To Sainte-Beuve at this stage, as to some of the narrowest mediæval ascetics, religion was one side of a series of false oppositions—credulity versus

science, authority versus freedom, contemplation versus activity, the courting of sorrow versus the acceptance of happiness, the life of the spirit alone (as if that were possible!) versus the life of spirit and flesh as one, which is the only life known to man on earth. These oppositions are not necessary, and the second side of the series will seem to any one in a healthy state of mind more like religious virtues than the first. Béranger had an eminently healthy mind, and it was left to him, of all Sainte-Beuve's correspondents, to tell him the truth about the *Consolations*. In a caustic but friendly letter he shows that he is not taken in by pretence nor in the least degree impressed by Sainte-Beuve's prodigious piety. He laughs him out of his cell and strips him of his cowl.

"I find your expressions of faith somewhat affected," he writes. "When you talk about 'the Lord', you make me think of those cardinals of old who used to thank Jupiter and all the gods of Olympus on the election of a new pope. If I pardon you for throwing this tattered garment of religious observance over your deistical faith, it is because I fancy you have borrowed it, in amorous condescension, from some fair woman who is tenderly superstitious."

On the one hand we have the grimace of this plain-spoken friend, Sainte-Beuve's subsequent denial that he was in earnest, and the

history of his relations with the Hugos; on the other hand, the minute analysis of religious sentiment contained in his poems and in *Volupté*, the sense of actual yearning and struggle which these convey, his letters to Barbe, to Victor Pavie, and later, in a reminiscent vein, to Juste Olivier, and such passages as this from the preface to the *Consolations*, where he refers to Hugo as the sustainer of his faith:

> "You have consoled me yourself and then have brought me to the source of all consolation; for as you have taught me from my youth, other waters dry up, and it is only on the banks of this heavenly Siloam that we can sit forever and quench our thirst. . . . God, then, and all that flows from him; God, immortality, rewards and punishments; here below, duty and the interpretation of the visible by the invisible—these are the most real consolations after misfortune, and the soul that has once formed a taste for them may indeed suffer still, but can never fall back into the old condition."

The choice is hazardous, but I cannot persuade myself that he was inspired with even a strong desire to lead a religious life. He was interested, he partly understood, he had what he called *velléités*, faint hankerings after religion; but of that firm conviction which dominates conduct and makes righteousness a glad necessity he knew nothing. He was playing a part. Half persuaded of its reality he may at times have been. "Look," he said to Olivier,

"we [poets] throw all our faith into our verses, so that when we have made a volume, all our faith is in it, and we have none left for ten years." But this is scarcely self-deception even; it is levity and petulance. The words are gay, but the heart of the speaker is sad.

Two results he worked out, however, in his period of storm and stress, and of these we may safely take account as contributions, the one to moral science, the other to literary art. He proved the difficulty, for a thoroughly modern mind, of resting satisfied with the type of religion which then appeared to him the only type, that is, the asceticism which takes nature as its opposite and the selfish desire for salvation as its motive. And he furnished a minute though by no means profound analysis, in the forms of imaginative creation, of the relation between such a type of religion and sensual desires. The action of *Volupté* is almost wholly interior. Its problem is altogether psychological. The chief character, Amaury, is one of the least distinctly drawn persons in fiction, if we ask how he looked and what he did and said, but one of the most laboriously engraved, with thousands of minute strokes, if we regard moral delineation. The historical and archæological details of the setting are painfully exact, but some-

how they remain details and never flow together in organic life, as Balzac knew so well how to make his details unite and live. The tone of the book is sombre. A leaden sky, a dull atmosphere, a presentiment of disaster, brood over its heavy and obscure action.

As a piece of autobiography, I am unable to attach to *Volupté* quite so much importance as D'Haussonville and M. Michaut attach to it. Subtle and devious, impressionable and ever-changing, *malleable* as Sainte-Beuve was, I find one thread of personality through all his metamorphoses, a unity, an integrity in his life which is revealed by his conduct, first of all, and by his plain statements in moods of disillusion, however it may be hidden for the deliberate purpose of writing poetry and fiction with a tendency. The main tenor of his life, temporarily weakened, but never quite hushed, was a clear rationalism. Mystical leanings, for a few years, with peculiar alliances of æsthetic gratification and sentimental disorder, affected but never possessed him. He was often a hopeful sceptic, examining this or that aspect of supernatural religion. But through all and under all, and both before and after all, he was fairly well content with his "real basis", as he called the materialistic and rationalistic philosophy of the eighteenth century.

If these inquiries should appear impertinent, it must be remembered that Sainte-Beuve was the author of an ambitious work in ecclesiastical history, which is likewise a profound study of the psychology of religion. And, what is even more important, it was his practice, and the secret of his mastery in his hundreds of essays, to dig into the soul's history of every writer he discussed. He reached back to the origins, to ancestry, childhood, and youth, and downward to the heart, grappling the nerves of motive and touching the lesions and deposits of early experience before he let his patient go. He was the physician still, even though, as is said, he left the Medical School so willingly that he did not take the trouble to bring away his instrument-case. It matters considerably what *his* life-history was. The theories of impersonal criticism that have come into fashion since his day would have drawn from him a sarcastic compliment, perhaps, but he was himself unblushingly personal. He was philosophical, not scientific. He took for granted that literature was a manifold and almost a complete revelation of human nature. He had comparatively little to say about literature as an art, about its "forms" and "laws" and "evolution"; literature was, in his eyes, an infinitely diverse expression of

personality, and personality was the substance of which literature was the shadow. The danger in applying his own procedure to himself is that we may be prematurely trenchant in deciding that he was thus or thus, for he was the most elusive of men, by disposition and by the character of his life-work impressionable, through his poetic sensibility enthusiastic, through his critical faculty liable to abrupt retreats. And furthermore, in regard to the subjects treated in this chapter, the danger of forming false estimates is increased by the fact that he deliberately concealed, while extravagantly multiplying, his traces.

One reason for trying to follow him as well as we can over this rather boggy ground, and a reason which in itself alone would justify the attempt, is that his critical judgments of his most eminent contemporaries were affected, were violently affected, by his experiences from about 1827 to about 1837. His words, and still more his reticences, on Vigny, Musset, Gautier, George Sand, Dumas, Balzac, would in many instances be incomprehensible without some knowledge of the false route he followed in those years, and his consequent revulsion. He was once the "house-friend", the heart's brother, of Victor Hugo. They broke, with agony of spirit. They came together again

and yet again. But suspicion, bitterness, abhorrence, replaced the sweetness of affiance. Both looked back with a sickening sense of disillusion upon the enthusiasms they had shared. Together they had squandered their moral sentiments. Shunning each other, they turned their backs also upon the memory of their excesses. And Sainte-Beuve, for his part, felt something like disgust for Romanticism, with its collateral associations. In 1856 he wrote, in a letter:

"I was once as closely connected as possible with M. Victor Hugo. My poems show it. This connection came to an end more than twenty years ago, for reasons which have remained known to him and me only. I have therefore not cared to write about him since that time, and I could not do it as an independent critic should write, without appearing to misconceive and violate a former friendship, or to desire to go back and resume my former relations with him."

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

Political liberalism in France under the Restoration was necessarily an intellectual attitude. Its leaders did not anticipate an immediate overthrow of the government. It would be unfair to say that they were inciting the masses to court the dangers and the inevitable sacrifices of an armed uprising. Their purpose was to propagate opinions which should at some distant date and in some indeterminate manner effect a reform. Among the elements of this reform the abolition of monarchy was of course included, but rather as a means to more important ends than as a thing in itself essential. Liberty of instruction and of worship, freedom of the press, the right of assembly, and some of the acts of social amelioration which the conversion of Europe and America from agricultural to industrial pursuits was already making desirable, the restraint of the rich, the protection of the poor—these were the more cherished desires of the agitators, among whom the supporters of the *Globe* were prominent. In an article on his former colleague,

Lerminier, printed in December, 1832, Sainte-Beuve sums up thus the work in which they both had been engaged:

"In the last six years of the Restoration . . . there originated, in despair of the present and in faint though instinctive hope for the future, a school of political philosophy which undertook the reform and emancipation of the country by means of *ideas*, that is to say, by spreading all sorts of knowledge, of studies and theories capable of fertilising the future. This task was noble and courageous. The school of which we speak . . . succeeded, sooner than one would have dared to believe possible at first, in establishing a grave, salutary, incontestable influence. In philosophy, in literature, in criticism, it was efficacious in modifying opinion; in politics proper it was less decided, and wore an aspect which was honest rather than attractive."

They made the mistake of overlooking the People, and the People gave them a surprise; for these men of thought and of words were almost as much shocked as the monarchists and clericals themselves when the rattle of musketry awoke Paris in the dog-days of 1830. The populace, which had suffered most, was ready first to risk life, and had not waited for the word of command from its intellectual superiors. The result was the attainment of a minor benefit—the overthrow of the "legitimate" monarchy—and a few steps gained towards the more essential goods of social progress. When the revolution began, Sainte-Beuve was at Honfleur, in Normandy, visiting

his friend Ulric Guttinguer. He made better speed to return to his post than Milton made on a like occasion and under a similar impulse, but when he reached Paris the moment of physical strife had passed. Several of his comrades in literature had fought behind the barricades, and one had lost his life.

Under the new administration, many of his colleagues left the *Globe* to accept office. Writing to his friend Victor Pavie, September 17, 1830, Sainte-Beuve says:

"I was not here during the revolution. I came too late from Honfleur—too late, for it would have been my lot to die honourably, of a bullet-wound. But it is written that I shall fall short of my destiny in all things. All this has thrown me far from writing novels and poetry. My political ardour has revived, and for more than a month I have been back at the *Globe*, pouring out harsh and sombre doctrine. I think I have cause to complain of my friends on the *Globe*, who have shown me very little kindness since their accession to favour. Power spoils men as soon as they touch it. Pray for me, friend, and love me a little, for I suffer horrible soul-pangs; all my poesy dammed up, all my love without issue, sour me and consume me. I have become wicked again. Oh, when a man is hated, how soon he becomes wicked! I am not hated, or at least I trouble myself little about those who hate me, but my grief and my crime is that I am not loved, not loved as I wish to be, myself also loving. That is the secret of my whole mad existence, which is without continuity, dignity, object, or plan. When I was still a child, I dreamed of only one kind of happiness—love, and I have never obtained it, nor even fully felt it."

It was hard for him to submit to discipline. His interests were more inward than those of his colleagues. Their zeal for practical politics excited his youthful scorn. The criticisms of his chief exasperated him, and he was too little of a partisan to tolerate with composure the necessities of combined effort. Once, after the enervating excitement of the revolution of 1830, he had a dispute with Dubois, which ended in a duel. "I don't mind being killed," Sainte-Beuve is said to have exclaimed, "but I don't want to get wet"; and, as it was raining, he stood his ground with pistol and umbrella. The quarrel grew out of the reorganisation of the paper, rendered necessary by the departure of so many of the staff to accept office under the government of Louis Philippe. The state system of education having been reformed and liberalised, some of the editors had returned to their old profession of teaching. The paper remained more than ever at the disposal of one of its joint founders, Pierre Leroux, the least literary and perhaps the most earnestly radical of the group.

Sainte-Beuve was thrown, by this impoverishment of his social life on its external side, into more intimate relations with the Hugo family. He tells us that he appealed to the poet in the name of the régime which was

beginning, in the name of the new France; that he tried to "deroyalise" him, in an article which he published in the *Globe* in August, 1830, and which can now be read in volume XI of the *Causeries du Lundi*. There are traces of a disposition to envy Dubois and the others, once his fellow-journalists, who were now become prominent and even eminent. They had shot out of their old earthly sphere and were now gleaming on high in celestial glory, ministers and politicians, while he, as worthy as the best and no less ambitious than any of them, was left to glow obscurely. The mere difference in emoluments was enough to disturb him. Even if one were so uncharitable as to blame him for suffering from this cause, he must be pardoned for complaining that to him, almost alone of the group, was given no opportunity to carry out in practice some of the administrative plans which he had helped to form.

He preserved, on the whole, a dignified attitude, though neither on this nor on any other occasion was he able entirely to conceal his emotions when he had suffered neglect. He never forgot a grief. In this case it offended him to be unrecognised, for in aspiration he was very far from being merely a literary artist. His scope was very wide. No

man ever attempted more persistently to obey the maxim, "Know thyself"; no man ever practised more thoroughly the doctrine that education consists in finding out and exercising one's native capacities. As an editor of the *Globe*, even though most of his articles were reviews of books, he had been discovering and deploying his political faculties. It is interesting to compare the articles which to-day fill the first two volumes of the *Premiers Lundis*, articles which were nearly all originally printed in the *Globe*, with those bound up, most illogically, in the third volume of the same series. The latter are chiefly the speeches Sainte-Beuve made in the Senate in 1867 and 1868, on political subjects. The style has grown at once more subtle and more simple; the tone is bolder; the things desired and the things abhorred are mentioned in plainer terms; the writer has thrown off every disguise. But after all, if one recalls what were the political issues under the Restoration and how they were woven in and out of every enterprise in art and education, it will be evident that the harmless-looking book-reviews of 1828 were no less political than the addresses forty years later in defence of secular instruction and a free press.

The revolution of 1830 produced on the minds of many persons one effect of which they were

perhaps not conscious at the time, and which was not indeed creditable to their strength of character. Men who had been stiffening up their religious professions under a supposedly strong reactionary government now began to relax. Dubois and others like him had no cause to reproach themselves; their rationalism had resisted all temptations in the days of trial and was now triumphant. But the Romanticists were destined to present the appearance, at least, of fair-weather friends to both extremes of belief; and the direction of their faces, if not the cry of their mouths, changed after the revolution of 1830. Sainte-Beuve, being in love (in love with love, and wont to express the fact in Augustine's sweet and sentimental phrase) and having entered upon his desperate enterprise of storming the heights of Parnassus, still found it natural and also convenient to *feel* as a Christian. But it is instructive to read his every-day prose of the period 1830–1837 and his letters to some of his correspondents, and mark the contrast between these, on the one hand, and all he wrote during the same period under the influence of the "charm".

He abides for us and for perhaps several generations to come almost solely in his critical writings, but to himself and to his early con-

temporaries he appeared rather as the elegist. "I was above all else a poet in 1829," he declares, "and I remained stubbornly faithful to my chimæra for several years, criticism being then scarcely more for me than a pretext to write analyses and portraits." There is here, as in all his references to his poetical career, a touch of exaggeration. The number and quality of his critical articles published in those very years exclude the opinion that they were written as a subordinate exercise. Moreover, what was his best critical work but just "analyses and portraits"? He probably means that he was at that time not much concerned about forming a method; and indeed it is remarkable, and delightful, too, and fortunate, that he never at any time subjected himself to a theory of criticism. His critical work in those years was affected by his sentimental disorders and his ambition to succeed in poetry.

Exemption from personal motives or affections is no more attainable by critics than by other men. Historians have never reached this height, and it is to be hoped, in the interest of literature, that they never will. Throughout his long career, with many temptations to misuse his opportunities, it is doubtful if Sainte-Beuve ever wrote what he did not at the time believe in regard to any author, alive

or dead. But he was subject to the passions of jealousy, envy, curiosity, love, friendship, hatred, ambition; and as he himself confessed, his works, to be rightly understood, must be read with knowledge of their dates. What he wrote before July, 1830, in admiration of Hugo, in fellowship with the lesser members of the Cénacle, in sympathy with supernatural religion, in zealous co-operation with the principles of Romanticism, he could no longer write in the same enthusiastic strain in 1831, when a dark cloud of suspicion was rising between him and his friend, when the Cénacle had dispersed, when the unfinished house of their faith had been abandoned, when Romanticism had succeeded only too well and was running into absurd excess. And yet, because the attitude of the elegist persisted when so much was ruined that had awakened in Sainte-Beuve the ambition to be a poet, his sentimental phase passed away very slowly. Indeed, it tinged his life until well on towards 1839. And particularly in the years 1830–1837 we are spectators of a curious phenomenon, which resembles what we behold in the early morning sky when moonlight fades before the invading sun. His cherished hopes of poetic fame, cherished to the point of blind self-misunderstanding and foolish tenderness, his desire to

be loved, not, one fears, from need of companionship but from curiosity and a craving after experience, made him willing to subject reason to sentiment so long as there was, in his sanguine opinion, the slightest chance of success. But meanwhile his critical faculties were splendidly unfolding, and it was a very pale moon that eventually sank out of sight. The stronger luminary had cast its beams well in advance; for as far back as 1829, in the newly founded *Revue de Paris*, a succession of articles had appeared which show that Sainte-Beuve was even then finding satisfaction for his deepest tastes in reading Boileau, Madame de Sévigné, La Fontaine, and Racine.

In November, 1830, Pierre Leroux, deserted by most of his colleagues, converted the *Globe*, whose glory had been its independence, into the organ of Saint-Simonism, and on December 27 it assumed the sub-title of "Journal of the Doctrine of Saint-Simon". On January 18, 1831, it published a profession of faith in Saint-Simon, signed by Leroux, but written by Sainte-Beuve. Saint-Simonism was a political party, a school of economics, a social experiment, a philosophy of the universe, a religion. It came into being in 1825, after the death of the man whose name it bore, and the revolution of 1830 gave it, like

several other idealistic enterprises, an opportunity for expansion.

Claude-Henri de Rouvray, Count de Saint-Simon, was born in 1760 and died in 1825. He was a collateral descendant of the great Duke de Saint-Simon who wrote the memoirs. He was accustomed to trace his lineage back to Charlemagne. He went to America in 1779 as a soldier in the Revolutionary War, and returned to France a colonel at twenty-three. He gave up his title and took a passive but not hostile interest in the French Revolution, studied prodigiously, travelled, made a large fortune by indirect and crooked means, was inflamed with zeal to benefit mankind and with a sense of his divine mission. His great ancestor Charlemagne appeared to him in a vision and told him that their house was destined to give the world what no other family had given, a supreme man of action and also a supreme philosopher. His philosophy is sufficiently obscure. One of its central ideas appears to be the establishment of gravitation as a principle no less efficient in the moral than in the physical world. But the humbler practical parts of his system are less bewildering than this high argument. He was the prophet of industrialism. Productivity was his war-cry. As if foreseeing, however, some of the slavery that

was to make industrialism grow like a giant and some of the impoverishment that was to dog the heels of productivity, he advocated free-trade and collectivism and the abolition of private property-rights, especially the right of inheritance. The state should be all and have all. It was the doctrine of a French Hobbes, more formal and logically consequent than any scheme that ever was devised outside of France. He professed to be divinely inspired, but the course of his life did not attest divine favour, except in being, like many other noble lives, an apparent failure. It was not a real failure, however, and the seed that fell into the ground and died was destined to yield, if not an hundred-fold, at least a very remarkable harvest. On his death-bed he bequeathed his ideas to a few faithful followers, and, to use a comparison which the Saint-Simonists were fond of employing in close detail, Pentecost succeeded Calvary.

Saint-Simon died May 19, 1825, and on the first of June his disciples founded a paper, the *Producteur*, which appeared weekly, then monthly, and lasted a year. Within a few weeks of the "Master's" death, a new religion had been born and a new sect organised. Several other theocratic projects were entertained in France about this time. Ballanche

published his *Social Regeneration* (*Palingénésie sociale*) in 1828. Bonald and Joseph de Maistre were insisting on a reconstitution of Europe under papal authority. The followers of Saint-Martin, the Unknown Philosopher, were teaching his mystical doctrine of a state whose laws were divinely revealed.

Among the original Saint-Simonists were several civil engineers and a number of wealthy men in high social positions. The objects and methods of the association wore a distinctly scientific character, and it was in this circle that the idea of digging the Suez and Panama canals was conceived, and the idea of damming the Nile. In the last days of 1829 Enfantin and Bazard were elected to the double headship of the Saint-Simonist Church. A regular cult was developed, or rather created out of whole cloth, with ritual, calendar, hierarchy, and even a peculiar cant. Rodrigues, for example, speaks of being "great in Saint-Simon", as who should say "strong in the Lord". In July, 1829, another organ had been founded, the *Organisateur*, a weekly. Its offices were close to those of the *Globe*. At first the latter, being directed by men whose economic theories resembled those of the Manchester school and were therefore diametrically opposed to the collectivist theories

of Saint-Simon, was hostile to its neighbour, but it appears that Leroux attended meetings of the sect even before the July days of 1830. After the revolution he went over openly, and in November, 1830, sold his journal to Enfantin.

The *Globe* would probably not long have survived the breaking up of its old staff and the success of its programme, in any event; but after it became the organ of an obscure sect, it soon ceased to exist, on April 20, 1832, in spite of large subsidies. Sainte-Beuve did not stand by the sinking ship. His last contribution, it appears, was printed on March 22, 1831. He denied that he ever surrendered to the Saint-Simonists, although in 1840 he wrote that he "was very intimately connected" with them. Long after that, however, he tells us that his relations with them remained always free and unattached: "When people say that I took part in the preaching services in the Rue Taitbout, what do they mean? If they mean that I took part like Lerminier, in a sky-blue coat and sitting on the platform, it is all nonsense. I went there as one goes everywhere when one is young, to every interesting show." He was in a mood for making disavowals when he wrote this, yet it may be strictly true, though he need not have been ashamed of any generous sympathy which he might have shown for men

so disinterested and a movement which, for all the excess of its pretensions, was singularly prophetic. He was at this time filled with a desire for spiritual adventure. Though his heart was heavy, his intellect was never more buoyant, more dirigible, all sail set to catch the wind. Nevertheless, I am disposed to doubt if he ever wrote the article on the doctrine of Saint-Simon which is to be found in the second volume of *Premiers Lundis*. This collection was put together after his death. The article in question, which appeared anonymously, is so extremely favourable and written in such wild and whirling words, that it is certainly not characteristic of Sainte-Beuve. Nor was he the man to assume an attitude like this in a spirit of irresponsible levity. If he was indeed the author of that eulogy, then it is in vain he insists that he was not much affected by the new sect, for the language is that of a disciple. Probably he expressed the full extent and the precise nature of the influence of Saint-Simonism upon him when he wrote, in the fourth volume of *Nouveaux Lundis:* "None of those who passed through Saint-Simonism, or who touched even the borders of it, did so without being affected by it. Apart from its economic and industrial tendency, it gave the idea of a religion and a respect for this, the highest of all

social forms, to more than one man who lacked anything of the sort before." He had learned to what lengths enthusiasm may carry a community, and how the general emotion reacts upon individuals, but he had not shared Enfantin's wild dream of destroying marriage and subjecting all things to the state leviathan.

The revolution of 1830 released him from many a bond to silence. In an article on Jouffroy, printed in December, 1830, he speaks his mind about the eclectic philosophy, dealing resentfully with Jouffroy and still more so with Cousin. Referring to them again, and to his old environment of the *Globe*, he wrote, in 1833:

"To-day men are not so high and mighty with their dogmatic opinions as they were in the enlightened and elegant world from 1826 to 1830. The doctrinaire cant, which threatened to envelop a portion of our younger generation, and held up its hands at all that did not accord with the authoritative diapason, at all that was lively, self-willed, spontaneous, passionate, poetic, and, as we say, Jacobin—the doctrinaire cant, so contrary to the clear, active, enterprising, and accommodating genius of France, has ceased to weigh upon society. What the men of that stripe have gained in material and temporal power they have forever lost in moral authority."

The articles on Thomas Jefferson, printed in February, 1833, show a liking for democratic ideals and for eighteenth century deism which he would scarcely have ventured to express in so unqualified terms three years earlier.

And yet when Sainte-Beuve analyses a man, a school of thought, or a doctrine, warming to his work and approaching its details from the centre, with appreciation and enthusiasm, we must beware of concluding that he has espoused the cause he is representing. He is an advocate, with a true pleader's instinct, and never a disciple. Not that he sold his talent. His client was his own good taste, and he could withhold as well as give. Generally he chooses a congenial theme and treats it positively rather than negatively, almost persuading us, if we do not stand upon our guard, that he is a partisan of the view he presents. But this in many cases cannot be true. The same man who delights in portraying the noble and holy traits of Fénelon narrates, with extreme gusto and without a word of censure, the libertine escapades of Casanova de Seingalt. Yet we are asked by all his biographers to believe that he went through real transformations and that these may be traced in the waxing and waning of the enthusiasm with which he abandons himself to various movements and personalities. The English language is poor, comparatively, in the class of words in which his biographers and he himself have expressed the sense of his elusiveness, his chameleon-like habit of changing colour to match his environment. He was

compliant, slippery, malleable, inconstant, inconsistent, supple; he was also, to revert to the language which is so rich in social and moral distinctions, *insaisissable*, *délié*, *nuancé*, *insinuant*, *mobile d'esprit*.

It is necessary at this point, if we are not to flounder helplessly between two contradictory views, to formulate a working hypothesis. We are observing a period of his life when his receptive nature—there can be no doubt that it was astonishingly receptive—and the character of his occupation led him into many cordial contacts which may or may not be properly termed adhesions. It has been urged, with much plausibility, that he was really, in his youth, what he represented himself to Barbe; that he was a deist; that he threw himself heart and soul into the Romantic movement; that he never believed in it; that he was a disciple of Saint-Simon; that he was a democrat; that he was a monarchist. In reference to a new phase of his life to which we have now come, his connection with Lamennais, Lacordaire, Montalembert, Lamartine, and liberal Catholicism, M. Michaut declares that "the crisis of his sensibility", that is, apparently, his attachment to Madame Hugo, "had rendered a religion necessary to him". One is tempted to permit one's self the observation

that attachments of such a sort create a peculiar need for religion, but are incompatible with religion. But of course M. Michaut's meaning is that the emotional disturbance attendant upon his amour rendered him susceptible to affections of a higher order. This is much too fine-spun, even though it is precisely what Sainte-Beuve himself would have us believe. Here, as at more than one other point, he was laying a trail for posterity, leading to conclusions which he thought would impart lustre, or rather glamour, to his name. Who should understand better than Sainte-Beuve what kind of anecdotes, what kind of qualities, what order of contradictions serve as a perpetual allurement to curiosity?

It must be admitted that we do not escape all difficulties by adopting an hypothesis contrary to the very awkward one that he was sincere in his conversions. But it has its advantages, the chief of which is that it binds together the beginning and the end of his career and shows the child to have been truly father of the man. As for the "conversions", then, which were so numerous between his twenty-fifth and his thirty-fifth year, it must suffice to say that they were experiments. Like a young man lodging alone in a great city, who tries one way after another of spending his evenings, looking

in at music-halls, political clubs, theatres, and churches, seeking resource and amusement and perhaps even a mission, a call to devote himself to some great cause, awakening hopes in others and sometimes feeling powerfully attracted, yet never wholly captivated, so Sainte-Beuve crossed the threshold of many a party and many a faith, but always withdrew before the house could claim and hold him.

Stevenson says a good reader is one who does not permit himself to be daunted by pages which shock his prejudices and preconceptions, but goes ahead until he sees the matter in the light in which the author means he should see it. In the same spirit Sainte-Beuve read life. The more puzzling the page, the more it solicited his attention. In order to understand, he was willing to go through a novitiate. Without being insincere, he submitted, by a relaxation of his will, to the influence of the person or school that aroused his curiosity. When later he shook himself loose, like a bee rising from a blossom, there was often a sense of remorse in his backward glance, but seldom a sense of rancour, for he knew he had no right to complain if he was disillusioned. He tried the rivers of Damascus, Abana and Pharpar, but had not enough patience to dip seven times in Jordan; once or twice was

enough, for it was more his purpose to test the water than to cure his leprosy. And in this he was fulfilling the law of his nature. His function in the world was to make report. He was a scout, not a fighter in the ranks. It is unjust to charge him with apostasy, for, whatever his anxious friends may have hoped, he never "belonged" to anything. He was a spiritual adventurer, not wantonly nor gaily, but driven by a characteristic instinct as earnest and sincere in its way as the blindest self-devotion of a credulous enthusiast. Only the pathetic eagerness of his old fellow-townsman Morand and the controversial zeal of Count d'Haussonville can make him out to have been truly a Catholic in his boyhood. Only a hostile spirit, striving to convict him of absurdity, could see in him a real Saint-Simonist. And not even the impartial and well-informed M. Michaut can convince us that he was more than a student of Catholic liberalism when he breathed for a time the same atmosphere as Lamennais, Gerbet, Lacordaire, and Montalembert, or reposed in the calm sunshine of Lamartine, or basked in the delicate fragrance of the Abbaye aux Bois, he, a bourgeois by birth and disposition, flattered with the patronage of Madame de Récamier.

The basis of his nature remained the same: he was a son of the French Revolution, a

rationalist, the borrowed wings of his faith never sufficing to lift him above the ground. In his opinion the French Revolution and the philosophy of the eighteenth century were, to use his own phrase, "the only reproductive and prolific origins for our age". To the positive views of the eighteenth century, however, there had succeeded, in France as elsewhere, a kind of scepticism, a disposition to re-examine the things which had been so boldly relinquished, and Sainte-Beuve is, as it were, a tremulous magnetic needle recording these variations. But though he fluctuates, the north to him is still the same. There is a breath of undeniable sincerity in a letter he wrote to J.-L. Tremblai, author of *Disease and Recovery* (*Maladie et Guérison*), the "Return to Catholicism of a Child of the Century":

"I have been deeply touched by the letter and the verses you have sent me, and at the same time I find it difficult to make a worthy response to such confidence. You have the goodness to judge of me by my verse and to attribute to me as my habitual disposition what is only a transitory gleam in my life. You are unhappy, and you seek consolation of me. Would that I possessed the secret of consolation, sir, and had in me the spring of living water; I should not withhold it, I assure you. But it is not in us that it is to be sought. When one has faith and the support of a positive religion, the source of consolation is almost discovered. When one has not the happiness to believe, the ill is almost beyond remedy; one can only allay it by human counsel, which is very

imperfect. Love, when not contrary to social order, is the best earth can offer to the exiled souls she harbours; friendship can do much, but I have the misfortune not to count heavily on its sovereign efficacy."

The nineteenth century, especially the first half of it, was marked in France, even more than elsewhere, by many scattered and unconcerted reactions against the philosophy of the eighteenth. The latter failed to satisfy that love of chivalry, of mystery, of hero-worship, which is inherent in human nature, or, perhaps it would be as true to say, has been inherited from ages of aristocratic pretensions and awe-struck submission. Not even yet have the splendid achievements of the Revolution been appreciated. Not yet is it generally perceived that in the Revolutionary doctrines of equality and fraternity there is an ideal, a religion, capable of filling the soul and occupying the energy of society. And those who asked for something they considered more sublime, while they enriched the age with many highly coloured pictures of felicity, were really dazzling men's sight and making them unfit to enjoy the grand and simple outlines of the great composition. Carlyle with his theory of heroes, Newman with his grammar of assent, Ruskin with his glorification of the Middle Ages, were all leaders of reactions against the Revolutionary movement.

Goethe did not so oppose it. His special endeavour was rather to modify it by reconciling it with a stream of tendencies flowing from a remoter source, to subdue its excesses and regulate its course by uniting it with Greek culture. In France the Romantic movement was in large measure anti-Revolutionary. From Chateaubriand and the Hugo of *Odes and Ballades* to Lamartine and the last phases of Balzac, there was as much of social reaction as of social progress in the spirit of the dominant literary school. Useful to the school as he was, an adept, even, in the methods of the school, and no small contributor to its achievements, Sainte-Beuve remained superior to its mediævalism and its mystical vagueness. But he differs, too, in certain essentials from the men of the eighteenth century. He is not so easily satisfied with a purely logical investigation. He was a humanist, not a logician. He sought truth through emotional experience as much as through intellectual analysis. And although the logical understanding always had the last word with him and decided doubtful causes, he lent a ready ear to the testimony of his hopes and fears, his instinctive affections, and the mixed voices of his time. To himself, during those ten years, and to many of his intimate friends, he must have appeared, and

we know from his correspondence that he did appear, an open-minded, susceptible young man, seeking light and favour, ready to affiliate with those who would at once nourish his poetical capacity by enriching his emotions and open a little farther the channel through which he might send one more expedition towards the spiritual Pole.

But as his whole career lies spread before us, we can also see, now, that he was at the same time leading another and quite different intellectual life. Much of his study, many of his associates, most of his critical production, even between 1830 and 1837, are proofs of this. When a man leads a double intellectual life, as very many persons do, going far in one direction in pursuit of emotional satisfaction, of calm, of conformity to inveterate habit, of historical or æsthetic integrity, going far also in a precisely contrary direction at the bidding of inevitable logic—which of these two modes shall we say is his true and characteristic life? In many cases, no doubt, we should have to know the man in order to answer, though in general it is the rational mode that shows which way the person is moving, and the emotional which shows whence he started and what he has left behind. In Sainte-Beuve's case there is little room for doubt that the original, per-

manent, and characteristic mode was bare rationalism. His so-called conversions were frequent and diverse. Even his poetic sensibility and youthful enthusiasms for certain literary theories were fleeting. His supposed love-affairs were peculiarly unreal. The mood which gave birth to *Joseph Delorme* and *Volupté* was transient. His political affiliations were never regarded without suspicion by his contemporaries, not even excepting the last position he took, a position frankly radical, under a reactionary government. Hitherto his politics had been opportunist. Here at last, however, he was consistent with himself.

The division may seem unduly trenchant, but I think one is forced to distinguish two personalities in Sainte-Beuve's life, one fictitious, the other real. The former was the man of metamorphoses, the sighing lover, the semi-convert to orthodox Catholicism, to Saint-Simonism, to liberal Catholicism, to Protestantism, to the ghost of Jansenism; the poet, too, except when experimenting in forms and methods and writing literary *causeries* in verse; the author of *Volupté;*—over this man there hangs an air of unreality, he forces the note, he exalts himself unduly, he fondles favorite traits, he caresses himself, he poses while affecting to withdraw, he is his own hero, in a

distorted, improbable, unreal world. To this man we may attribute the indiscretions, the peevishness, the quivering vanity, the courting of notoriety even when notoriety involved a blasting disgrace. This is not an altogether fanciful distinction, and it is very convenient. As a temporary expedient, there can be no objection to cutting a man in two, provided we do not lose sight of the pieces. The real Sainte-Beuve, then, was a sceptic and a democrat; his preference for a purely naturalistic and even materialistic interpretation of the world was constant and increasing; through all the currents of nineteenth century reaction, to which he sometimes yielded from curiosity, tolerance, or hope, he kept in his topsails a capful of the wind that blew out of the stormy Revolution. If, as has been said, and, I think, untruly, he feared nothing so much as a popular uprising, might he not have felt such dread because of his profound conviction that the work of the Revolution had been checked half-way and would, if not intemperately pushed, be accomplished in the end? Whatever one may think of the virtue of such a course, it is a fact that he utilised monarchy in the interest of popular freedom. Bonapartism appealed to him as being the best available representative of the Revolution.

The effect of his devious conduct upon persons with whom he sailed for a while, only to part from them, is easily traced in their correspondence. Their references to him are often, indeed generally, tinged in the end with disappointment. He awakened hopes and then appeared to evade responsibility. When men closed their hands to hold his, he had turned his back. There was as little of the conventional pilgrim in Sainte-Beuve as can be imagined, yet he was indeed a pilgrim, foreign in faith and purpose to the groups through which he passed. As it is a mistake to talk of his "conversions", so it is unjust to speak of his "apostasy". When he left Hugo, when he left Lerminier sitting in a sky-blue coat on the platform in the Rue Taitbout, when he caught up with Lamennais and Lacordaire and then passed out of their sphere, was he to blame? Leaving aside the rupture with Hugo, which was due more to Sainte-Beuve's abominable misconduct than to the great poet's gigantic vanity, we have not, in these cases, a question of right and wrong; a deep critical, historical, and moral instinct was driving its possessor to seek his own for the good of all. "If there are," he once wrote, "epochs in the life of the world in which morals precede ideas, there are others in which, amid the prostration of ancient

morals, the initiative in the work of reforming and retempering the nations belongs to ideas. We are evidently in such an epoch; we must take up and organise the work which the eighteenth century left half done and in a stage of destruction."

In the brief sketch called *My Biography*, Sainte-Beuve flies too lightly, it would seem, over an important passage of his life soon after 1830. He became connected with the *National*, a political journal of extreme republican principles, edited by Armand Carrel. Here his incursions into politics were short, he tells us, and he confined his attention as much as possible to literary subjects. Yet at the time it was regarded as quite significant and enough to stamp him with the seal of a party that he should be a frequent contributor, for two years, to a paper of such radical tendencies, and on terms of intimacy with an enemy of the government. Even the literary subjects he discussed in this journal were such as he could treat more freely there than elsewhere: for example, Heine's *France*, Béranger's *Chansons*, Lerminier's *Influence of the Philosophy of the Eighteenth Century on Legislation and Social Life in the Nineteenth* (*De l'Influence de la Philosophie du XVIIIme Siècle sur la Législation et la Sociabilité du XIXme*), the works

of Thomas Jefferson, and George Sand's *Indiana* and *Valentine*. In a narrow sense, politics did not, it is true, engage his pen. Offices, taxes, budgets, and diplomatic arrangements were outside of his province. But to the many points of contact between government and the culture of the people, points particularly numerous in a centralised administration, he brought a keen interest and professional skill. The school, the press, the theatre, the Church, in their relation to the State—it was precisely his mission as a critic to deal with these; and by dealing with them in a large, tolerant, flexible, accommodating spirit, with power and light, he forever destroyed the argument that a critic should attend only to the æsthetic study of literature. In a letter to Lerminier, dated April 7, 1833, he declares that his attitude in regard to active politics must be that of a commentator:

"If I were capable of action, of continuous, public, and influential action, I think it would be in a spirit of open war, impatient, and moving along revolutionary lines, going and coming like a free-lance, and keeping away from the camp. I should be forced to this course by many of my writings, which rise in my memory now. In fine, my dear friend, to be and remain *outside of everything* is, I believe, my heart's desire and my destiny. From time to time, in a moment of crisis and pressure, I will dash out to some threatened point, and at your side or at your heels I will strike a blow for you; and then

I will return to my own paths. One of my most precious consolations when I suffer at the thought of being nothing (for one must suffer at that thought sometimes) will be that men like you have deemed me fit, if I only would, to walk without fear in the routes they pursue."

The movement which was known as liberal Catholicism was more of a kind to attract Sainte-Beuve than the belligerent republicanism of Carrel, though the wily and worldly critic was too prudent to associate himself with its organ *L'Avenir*. It was the most moderate and practical of the many countercurrents produced indirectly by the great Revolutionary flood. Yet it was doomed to failure from the beginning, because it demanded sacrifices on the part of all to whom it addressed its appeal, offering to Church and State an occasion to win a great moral victory at the expense of half their extravagant claims. The government of Louis Philippe, although nominally at peace with Rome, was fostering the Gallican or anti-papal party in the Church. Meanwhile the weight of Rome's authority was being thrown, in Italy, Belgium, and Poland, against popular government, and was supposed to be useful in France as a support for the crown. The Abbé Félicité de Lamennais was the soul of a revolt that struck in both directions—against the irreligion of the French government on the one hand and the political

illiberality of the papal power on the other. He had been in high favour at Rome on account of his eloquent *Essay on Religious Indifference* (*Essai sur l'Indifférence en matière de Religion*), published in 1817–1823, a book more penetrating in the sincerity of its emotion and in its imaginative vividness than profound in its knowledge or just in its deductions, yet on the whole the ablest defence of Catholic doctrine that the reaction against the Revolution had produced. This fiery arraignment of every intellectual tendency at variance with invariable orthodoxy marked him as the champion of ultramontane pretensions.

The obscure middle-aged priest had risen to eminence when Sainte-Beuve sought his acquaintance, in 1829, attracted, as he explained later, not to the priest but to the author. In September, 1830, Lamennais sent a shock of apprehension through the ranks of the clergy, both Gallican and ultramontane, by establishing a journal, *L'Avenir*, devoted to the task of freeing the Church from governmental control and of soliciting Catholic approval of republican principles. His idea was a two-edged sword, and as he wielded it his friends fell back in alarm. He had been surrounded with admirers, attracted by the energy of his writings and by his frank hostility to the modern spirit; he

had been a man of consequence in the Church; but in the words of Mazzini, not even the thanks and praise he received at Rome could "dim the limpid and austere intellect of the priest". Clear and high, indeed, must have been the mind which in six years advanced from the obscurantism of the *Essay on Religious Indifference* to a theory of life based upon an understanding of the modern world and its needs. Several ardent and generous young men perceived the extent of his endeavour and came to his side, among them the Abbé Lacordaire, who had been converted by reading the *Essay*, and the Count de Montalembert, a youth of twenty. In the words of Montalembert, in his *Life of Lacordaire*, their periodical, *L'Avenir*, "flatly told the French clergy they must be prepared to give up the state grant, the only remnant of their ancient and lawful patrimony, the only guarantee of their material existence, prepared also to give up even the churches, the ownership of which was claimed by the State, in order to enter upon the enjoyment of the invincible strength and inexhaustible resources of modern liberty". In compensation, the Church was to be untrammelled by government, all its divisions were to be healed, the authority of Rome was to travel direct to every bishopric and every parish in France,

and education was to be free—that is, free from State control.

In 1832 *L'Avenir* was condemned by the Pope and suppressed. Its founders and editors went to Rome, and Lamennais tried in vain to make a personal appeal to Gregory XVI. Returning to France, he established a small community, half school, half hermitage, at La Chênaie, near Dinan, where Maurice de Guérin and other young men, poetical, pure-minded, craving the word of command from a dominant soul, gathered around him. Here, in December, 1832, Lacordaire, perceiving the breach that was growing in silence between the exalted, proud, convinced master, straining toward the future, and their past of submission and faith, rose in the dark morning and went away sorrowful, leaving a letter which said: "I believe that neither during my life nor even long after will republican institutions be possible in France or in any other country of Europe, and I cannot adopt any system grounded upon an opposite view."

Although Lamennais had signed a paper of submission to the papal order which put an end to his generous plans, and had since been careful to avoid offence, his naturally resentful disposition was goaded to further activity by what Gibson, one of his biographers, terms the

"insinuations of conscientious slander". He was a man under suspicion. His indignation, his thwarted love of humanity, his outraged manhood, at length broke silence in a work of lyrical genius, the *Words of a Believer* (*Paroles d'un Croyant*). Gregory XVI, in an encyclical of July 7, 1834, calls it "*libellum . . . male quidem exiguum, pravitate tamen ingentem*". It is a profession of faith in God and Man, a cry of torture from a soul in pain at the sight of human sorrow and injustice, a song of triumph in anticipation of the reign of peace. Defiant, or rather oblivious, of Rome, bitter against the corruption of French politics, scornful of the supposed glories of civilisation and fierce against its tolerated abuses, the author of this book, in very truth, as Pope Gregory declared, set himself "to break the bonds of fidelity and submission to princes, hurling on every side the torches of sedition and revolt, provoking the general destruction of public order, contempt of the executive, violation of the law, and tearing up by the roots the principles of religious and civil authority". It was to be expected that this open rupture with his past would cost him all his Catholic friends, but it is a sad fact that he was deserted henceforth by some of his radical friends too, although they must have shared

his opinions. We shall see presently how Sainte-Beuve behaved. It has been necessary to go into the details of this interesting subject, because he was one who stood near to Lamennais before the latter's condemnation and was instrumental in publishing the *Words of a Believer*.

A letter to Barbe, written December 18, 1831, contains a summary of Sainte-Beuve's inner history for the two or three years preceding that date:

"It is, I think, eighteen months since I have written to you, but so much has happened in the meanwhile that our rare correspondence has been enveloped in the whirlwind. I shall not attempt, my dear friend, to take up the thread where it was broken off. All that will be something to talk over when we meet, one of the many subjects piling up for a future which, alas! may never be ours. For my part, I have had, in my private life, many a cross and some little revolutions of my own. Thank God, they have not had such sad results as the big ones. You would find me to-day, as I was two years ago, modestly installed at No. 19, Rue Notre Dame des Champs, with my mother; older, both of us, each in a different way, but living comfortably enough. I say, my friend, that I have aged, and it is true, especially of my inner self. I dare not say I have made progress, though there have been no disasters. I am still moving in the direction of those ideas in which you took root early; my convictions tend that way and try to strengthen themselves in that soil more and more. You would approve of my opinions and my conversation, and I should no longer attack M. de Bonald's theories of language or have to be dragged into reading the *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*. But one must make one's life accord

with the ideas one holds to be true, which are true only because they throw a moral light upon our pathway. I have been intimate with M. de Lamennais and seen a great deal of him since I wrote you last. He has shown me marked friendliness. I have been to visit him at Juilly when he was staying there, and I used to see him often at Paris, for he was our neighbour. During his absence I see the Abbé Gerbet, a charming man, in whom religious unction is mingled with science. M. de Lamennais wanted to take me with him to Rome. I should have been delighted, but imperious and enduring reasons keep me here. I have suffered many sorrows in these last months—of the kind one avoids by staying in harbour. I have felt at last the passion which I had previously only desired as I caught glimpses of it; this passion is lastingly fixed in me and has caused many necessities in my way of life, bitterness mixed with sweet, and a duty of sacrifice which will have its good effect, but for which our human nature must pay a heavy price. I have not done much literary work, except in the newspapers and reviews. I am going to write a novel which will please you very much if I can execute it as I conceive it. If I get it done, I will send it to you. I am to collect a volume of prose, comprising biographical and literary articles contributed to the reviews, but it is not a consecutive composition; it is a gallery of portraits. So you see I am living a very retired life, my friend, reading, observing, seeing nothing at all of what is termed society."

Lamennais, by his revolt, lost the support of Lacordaire and Montalembert. Lacordaire, as a popular preacher, managed to combine the teaching of political liberalism with humble submission to the Pope. Montalembert pursued with honour a similar course, inculcating a moderate political liberalism in his numer-

ous and influential writings. As author of *The Monks of the West* (*Les Moines de l'Occident*) and *The Free Church in the Free State* (*L'Église libre dans l'État libre*), as an active publicist, as the venerable man who protested in 1870 against the dogma of papal infallibility, he never really renounced his allegiance to his old master. The rare and beautiful spirits who had felt Lamennais's fascination and sat with him under the pines at La Chênaie were dispersed, to battle with the world singly. Their enthusiasm and their distress are exquisitely depicted in the letters and journals of Maurice and Eugénie de Guérin. Even Sainte-Beuve's less sanguine nature had been stirred to hope that the pure and devout soul of Lamennais, the disinterestedness of his cause, the spirit of holiness which encompassed the group, might impart a purpose and a unity to the nation which were sadly lacking. It had always been the distinction of France to stand for something definite. Between the days of the First Empire, when she had concentrated her genius in one man, and the days of "permitted monarchy", an epoch of compromise, of double-dealing, of confused ideals and conflicting actions, the contrast was extreme, and men of imagination were tempted to think the change was mere decline.

It was in this mood that Sainte-Beuve welcomed the appeal of Lamennais summoning the Gallican party to give up its existence, pleading with the Pope to recognise popular rights, demanding of the monarchy that it should liberalise and purify itself and also that it should surrender the control of education, public worship, and church property to the papal power. Whatever his own scepticism as to the divine claims of the Church, Sainte-Beuve had gone through a sufficiently painful experience of the evils of indifference to be struck by a word of authority. When to this authority were added suavity, unction, eloquence, his imagination was captivated and he thought he saw in Lamennais a new Fénelon. His curiosity was excited, his professional interest was aroused, as was always the case when he encountered a person who seemed destined to add a new link to the chain of French history, especially when the possession of literary talent ensured immortality even if the political endeavour should be a failure.

But he attached himself to Lamennais not only as a war-correspondent attaches himself to an army in the field; there can be no doubt that the personality of the fiery Breton threw a spell upon him, and scarcely a doubt that the movement itself awakened a hope in him that

at last he might, with reservations of course, fling himself too, like happier and more believing natures, into a fruitful work of religion. He possessed an almost incredible adaptability. Beginning as a journalist in search of material, he habitually became interested as a moralist attracted by rare specimens of human nature, and often passed over into a stage of sympathy and acquiescence. He even adopts the tone of mind and the literary style of the subject. Then comes an inevitable cooling off, an inevitable disillusion, a final detachment, and the cry of apostasy is raised by those who fail to realise that with Sainte-Beuve criticism was an instinct and a passion. The case of Lamennais is typical, but it has one almost comical peculiarity. For here the critic was concerned with a nature quicker even than his own and far more decisive. Lamennais's change of front took his breath away. Sainte-Beuve awaited him at a certain spot, and behold! the priest it was who failed to keep his appointment. He had passed over and was far ahead, leaving his disconcerted friends and his amazed observer panting in one another's faces, at a loss to understand what had happened. It was too much even for Sainte-Beuve's mobility of mind. Celtic pride and resentment, a poet's reach of imagination, a leader's inspired stratagem had baffled him.

Three long articles on Lamennais tell the story: one printed in 1832, one in 1834, one in 1836. The first, entirely expository, develops the theme of submission to authority, and inculcates the dangerous doctrine that faith may be built upon the will to believe, without conviction, in the trust that a divine flash, a descent of heavenly grace, will illumine the soul; and here we have one of the earliest traces of Sainte-Beuve's preparatory studies in Jansenism. The opening pages of this essay almost equal Lamennais's own *Essay on Religious Indifference* in their invectives against the refined sensualism, the Epicurean tolerance, the opportunism, the weak surrender of principle, which were encouraged by the men who guided French thought after the revolution of 1830. Between the lines we may read a rancorous reflection on his old associates on the *Globe*.

The second article is more circumspect. Lamennais has uttered the *Words of a Believer*. It is perhaps to be regretted that he has struck so rude a blow against the sacred fabric already tottering, thus "increasing the apparent anarchy in that great structure already so compromised humanly", but Sainte-Beuve cannot help rejoicing in his generous imprudence, if it be imprudence, and congratulating him on it. There are devoted enthusiasms, self-forgetful

audacities, which win our hearts. Something martial and chivalric well becomes a Christian priest. And he praises the philanthropic spirit of the book:

"A popular sentiment breathes in every page; liberty here is not a hollow and sounding word; there is a precise understanding of the miseries of the poor and the iniquities to which they are subjected; . . . if Saint-Simonism, in its sudden appearance, had had no other effect than to produce in Christian minds this emulous anxiety about the profound sufferings caused by industrial excess and this desire to understand them, it would not have passed fruitless through history; . . . socially the significance of such works is great, and woe betide him who fails to see it."

The third article is an *adagio*, an elegy, a palinode. Lamennais has gone too far. He is a lost man. He is accursed. He is isolated. An empty space is widening about him. He has ventured where we cannot follow. We can only look with agony for the catastrophe. In reprinting the three articles, Sainte-Beuve felt constrained to remark in a footnote to the first:

"M. de Lamennais is no longer, in our eyes, the man who was distinguished among all those of the century by a singular quality of authority and faith; he is much more a man of this world, much less a priest, much more a writer and poet than we thought. He is now a sinner like ourselves, a secular man, fighting alone, struggling with doubt and temptation, and no longer to be admired and feared as the representative of an awful power. The illustrious author seems to us to have compromised in some degree the unity and authority of his life."

More than ever aroused by the complexity of the moral and psychological problem this man's life presented, Sainte-Beuve cannot conceal his surprise at his courage; he is bewildered by the inconsecutiveness of his conduct, the unmediated and apparently illogical step he has taken, the blind leap of the excited Celt. Was there some given moment, he asks, when the sacred vase broke in his hands, or was there an insensible decline and gradual descent from the holy mountain to the plain "where ignorant armies clash by night"? What bitterness to Lamennais the following words of praise may have contained we cannot know, but they are more sincere, no doubt, than some other phrases in the essay where they occur: "There is, in the débris of M. de Lamennais the Christian, the wherewithal to make the most virtuous, the most fervent, the most disinterested of glorious modern men, just as there is, in the ruins of his authority, material for an immense popularity."

Sincerity apart, and fidelity to friendship apart, these three essays are admirable instances of Sainte-Beuve's resourcefulness. He plays an astonishingly skilful game with his readers. It is not he who writes, but certain imagined persons. He is their mouth-piece. The first essay is Lamennais himself speaking through

a fervent disciple, Lamennais yet safe, yet within the fold, a voice not abhorred by any ear though already interestingly unwelcome to some. In the second, the voice is that of intellectual and progressive France, the serious French liberals who are still Catholic. In the third, the voice, never by any chance to be mistaken for Sainte-Beuve's own personal note, is that of a shocked ecclesiastic, a not unfriendly but disappointed, disapproving witness of the leader's defection, such a cry as Lacordaire might have uttered. Now, it must be remarked that Sainte-Beuve had a real cause for being dissatisfied with Lamennais. Their professional rôles were reversed. The priest, like the followers of Saint-Simon, regarded religion as a means of social regeneration. The critic was interested in religion as a means of salvation for the individual. So much, at least, of the Romantic habit clung to him still: he felt inclined to begin with himself. Personality more than humanity, men and women rather than peoples, souls not society, were the objects of his curiosity. At times his interest rose to the pitch of anxious care, and it was a Pascal or a Fénelon for whose counsel he waited, not a reformer of society in the mass. But these yearnings were æsthetic after all. He wished to feel, in order to know the sensation.

He wished to enrich his memory with a Christian experience. Two facts may be taken to prove this. One is that he was unwilling to give up certain courses which he admits were incompatible with a religious life. The other is that when he saw fit to withdraw from Lamennais, he sought the society of those who could satisfy his taste for a decorous, respectable, historic, and æsthetic type of religion, although without expecting from them any response to deeper needs, any healing for his wounds.

No man was ever more keenly aware of another man's deficiencies than Sainte-Beuve was aware of Chateaubriand's. Poison and antidote are not more subtly related than were these two natures. There were affinities as well as repulsions between them; Sainte-Beuve, at some times far more than at others, but always to some extent, admired the old lion of the Empire and the Restoration. He was fascinated by him. He could not get past him. He found Chateaubriand, a majestic figure, forever rising in his way. He was quick to perceive that the apparition was as much phantasm as reality, and no small part of the critic's life-work was evoked by this constant challenge to his penetration. With Lamartine he was less deeply though much more favour-

ably impressed. It is quite improbable that when Sainte-Beuve sought the society of these great men of letters, in the charmed circle of Madame de Récamier at the Abbaye aux Bois, he was seriously offering himself as a candidate for conversion. There was sufficient reason in his desire to know two of the most famous writers of his time and to meet the men who had "arrived" in politics and letters. It was by far the most aristocratic circle in which he had ever moved. And he there enjoyed the company of some younger men who were congenial—J.-J. Ampère, for example. He wrote to Ampère in December, 1834, when the latter was in Italy, "I go to the Abbaye once a week."

Even before the revolution of 1830, Sainte-Beuve had been mentioned as secretary of legation to accompany Lamartine to Greece, where the latter was to have been ambassador. Lamartine, in the early part of his career, realised one of Sainte-Beuve's ideals. His poetry had a distinct character. It was marked by sanity, good taste, and elevation. It accorded with the poet's personality. There was a fine integrity in the work itself and in the work considered with reference to him. He cultivated a restricted field, but it lay fair on a sunny slope, fruitful of sweet delights, remote from noxious vapours, and reserved by the

gods for uncontaminated pleasures, for gentle recreation, for soft repose. Such work, limited in its pretensions, excellent of its kind, and strictly within its kind, always won Sainte-Beuve's approval. As a student of men no less than as a critic of literature, it gave him satisfaction to see the boundaries sharply marked between types. He expressed his individual taste, as well as an admirable instinct of his race, when he praised a frugal style, simple, serious, and scrupulous, and praised no less a literary ambition justly measured to ability and subject.

From his first *Meditations* to his *Harmonies*, Lamartine satisfied this aspiration of the critic. We even feel that Sainte-Beuve prefers the simple *Meditations*, limited in form and scope, to the *Harmonies*, which, though still grave and serene, were called forth by a stronger wind, blowing from outside regions. Nevertheless, he says:

"We must turn to the *Harmonies* to see him unfold himself at his ease, without mixture or envelope, in the effusion of his grand manner. There the elegy, the circumscribed scene, the individual peculiarity, no longer exist; I hear only a general voice singing for all souls which still retain in some degree the seal of Christianity."

In spite of the eulogistic tone of the essay in which this passage occurs, the essay of

October, 1832, one can scarcely fail to perceive that Sainte-Beuve already regrets the abandonment of the "circumscribed scene" and the "individual peculiarity". He came later to beware of his professional interest in such cases, his natural desire to see an author whom he had once analysed and "placed" remain such as he had described him. Lamartine was to give him a lesson in elasticity, just as Lamennais had done.

The Portrait of 1836 shows that his subject had not developed according to his prediction. Lamartine is farther than he was before from the secure excellence of his early manner. His outlines are blurred. Under a tissue of praise, the critic, as is his wont, insinuates a poniard of rebuke. And he makes an elaborate comparison of Lamartine with Wordsworth, to the latter's advantage. "Wordsworth, like Lamartine," he says, "shows himself accessible to the future progress of humanity; and considering his age, and poet as he is of the woods and lakes and of solitude, he is admirably open-minded."

In the Portrait of 1839, is it only of Lamartine that the critic was thinking when he wrote as follows, after a severe judgment of the poet for becoming worldly and sceptical and for losing his prerogatives of simplicity?—

"At what point in a great man does legitimate development cease and begin to degenerate in overflow and ravage? Where should transformation be checked? Where does he really run off the track? Where is the place, the undecided level, where the lake we loved is no longer itself, but is indefinitely drowned and offers only a vague expanse of poesy?" It offended his sense of fitness that Lamartine should overflow his banks and mingle with the turbid currents of the century. Something of remoteness, of intellectual solitude, a purer life, a narrower and higher flight, he felt, was dramatically becoming to a poet who had made such a beginning as Lamartine. And although he at one time was not hostile to the political views to which Lamartine was committed, he did not like to think of him as a politician at all.

In noting the waste of energy, the loss of definite outline, the break-down of principle in Lamartine, Sainte-Beuve had in mind, no doubt, the assimilation of Lamennais by the vast ocean of secularity and Victor Hugo's throwing off nearly all restraint in art and conduct. Here again we have, though in a remarkably roundabout and unexpected way, the protest of the eighteenth century against the irregularity and insistent individuality of the nineteenth. Versatility was, in Sainte-

Beuve's eyes, of incomparably less value than completeness within definite limits. He was suspicious of immoderate ambition. He felt that the sanctity of art was violated by those excessive, unequal, and unrestrained efforts which indicate a poor adaptation of means to ends. Rather than see a career broken, an ideal destroyed, a unity shattered, he would put up with a measured success. He would welcome finite perfection at the expense of an infinitude of ill-matched aims. And thus we find the free-thinker lamenting, for art's sake, the departure of Lamennais and Lamartine from the fruitful conservatism of their early days.

And of Hugo, too, he lamented the departure from a definite position, not so much in this case because a literary unity was endangered as because he realised to what boundless, barren seas this towering vessel might be driven by vanity. In the Portrait of Hugo printed in July, 1831, he thus expresses his apprehension:

"The invasion of scepticism in the heart of the poet since those first and chaste hymns in which he laid himself bare to us creates a slow impression of dismay and causes us to attach a painful moral to the results of human experience. It is in vain that the poet cries so often 'Lord! Lord!' as if to reassure himself in the dark and fortify himself against himself. In vain he shows to his beloved the double star of the Immortal Soul and the Eternity of God, far off in a sombre sky. In vain he bids his eldest little daughter kneel before the Father of men

and joins her little hands to pray, placing on her childish lips the flaming psalm of the prophet. Neither *La Prière pour Tous*, which is so sublime, nor *L'Aumône*, which is so Christian, can cover the bitter reality: the poet has ceased to believe!"

These are strange words from Sainte-Beuve. They are almost shocking from a private friend, when we consider that their destination was public print. Such familiarities are distasteful to-day, and not so frequent as they were then. And we owe the change in taste and habit as much to Sainte-Beuve as to any one else. He recovered thoroughly enough from the disease of sentiment which rendered possible this kind of language, so intemperate, indiscreet, verbose, and sensational. Much of his work in the early thirties was disfigured by similar faults. He did not sufficiently restrain his feelings; it is even probable that he exaggerated them. He had not yet learned the value of innuendo; he was not yet an adept in the quick, almost imperceptible thrust, the unpretentious irony, the *amaritudo*, in fact, the absence of which he notes in Lamartine. What astonishes us, rather, and what we must admire in his early Portraits, is his abundance. One of the Portraits of Lamartine, for example, leaves the reader, even in our time when comparative literature is taught as a branch of learning, fairly gasping at his

knowledge of domestic poetry in English, German, Dutch, and Swedish, his comprehension of Coleridge, his intimacy with Crabbe, his feeling for Wordsworth. How brilliant is his remark that there is in Coleridge "an irresistible sympathy at all points with the Universal Life, though he seeks to repress this expansion and reduce it to a regular order of faith; he is, if I may say so, something like a Buddhist trying to be a Methodist"!

As we have seen, the third Portrait of Lamartine is magisterial. The humility of a beginner, the deference of a critic to a great poet, are thrown to the winds; no feelings are spared. The poet is advised to mend his ways, as the price of fame. We are made aware of the fact that 1839 is not 1832. The contrast between the Portraits of Hugo in 1831 and in 1835 was so very striking that Sainte-Beuve felt constrained, when reprinting them, to remark in a footnote:

"I have written much on M. Victor Hugo. It has seemed to me sufficient to choose for presentation here two articles, of which one expresses my extreme of praise and the other my restrictions. This alternative movement is a familiar practice of mine; it has been seen before, and in every case it was natural and sincere. It marks the two points in my own age and, as it were, the two epochs of my critical procedure."

But the "restrictions" really begin to appear in the Portrait of 1831, though masked with

flowers. It may be well to observe the fading of these decorations. Basing his remarks on *Autumn Leaves* (*Les Feuilles d'Automne*), the discerning but still considerate critic says:

"There are in this book of our great poet progress in art, progress in lyrical genius, progress in the profound study, the heaping up and the stirring of emotions; but of progress in religious belief, in philosophical certitude—shall I say it?—there is none at all. We have here a memorable example of the solvent energy of our century, and of its triumph, in the long run, over the boldest individual convictions."

And then, with an indiscretion which this time we may be thankful for, because it is so candid and illuminating, he remarks:

"Seated in his glory at his own fireside, believing, as his last and sole religion, in the family, in paternity, he accepts the doubts and anguish which must beset an ardent spirit, as one accepts an atmospheric law; he remains the happy and wise man in all that touches him immediately, with mortal anxieties haunting the outskirts of his genius; it is plenitude surrounded by emptiness."

In the second Portrait of Hugo the strokes are laid on with less precaution, and here again, as in the case of Lamartine, the critic does not hesitate to judge the artist: "Since M. Hugo has begun to meddle with the theatre, one might say that even his lyrical productions have taken a theatrical tone." He ridicules the notion that there is anything "Greek" in Hugo:

"M. Hugo, far from having in any respect a Greek organisation, is like an energetic and subtle Frank who has quickly become an able passed master in the Latin resources of the decadence, a Goth who has come up from Spain and made himself a Roman, very keen indeed in grammar and skilful in the style of the Eastern Empire and in the whole scheme of Byzantine ornamentation."

And he goes so far as to indicate, in highly figurative terms which would be understood at the time only by a small number of persons, but by them quite thoroughly understood, the two strains of amorous poetry in *Songs of Twilight* (*Les Chants du Crépuscule*), one inspired by Madame Hugo, the other by her supplanter. He, of all men, had reason to be silent; but with a false pretence of commiserating Madame Hugo he wrote, and every word had its premeditated weight:

"The twelve or thirteen amorous elegiac pieces which form the middle of this collection in its truest and sincerest part are followed by two or three others, and especially by a final one entitled *Date Lilia*, which has for its object, in some sort, to crown the volume and protect it. . . . It would appear that the author, in conclusion, has tried to throw lilies in our eyes. We regret that he should have thought this care necessary. The unity of his volume suffers therefrom; its title, *Songs of Twilight*, is hardly consistent with this duality. . . . He has not perceived that the general impression would be that a respected object would be better honoured and praised by omission."

He touches on the "respected object", and the great ideal who has tumbled from his

pedestal, in a letter to Barbe, written probably in 1836; he should like to talk with his old friend about the men he has known too well to admire now with enthusiasm:

"Having approached almost all of them in a spirit of admiration and praise, I soon got to the bottom of the business, and I know, unhappily, the whole story of their secret vanity. . . . There are also sorrows, a sorrow, which I could scarcely help mentioning if I were to have a talk with you. I should merely mention it, my friend, since I respect your grave and scrupulous profession; yet I will mention it, and you will pardon me for doing so, for it is the very heart of me, and sorrow religiously embraced consecrates, purifies, expiates."

The letters to Barbe, written often at long intervals and without many renewals of personal acquaintance between the priest and the critic, would, if taken by themselves, give us a picture of the latter's purposes and ideals very different from that presented by the larger canvas of his life. He cherished this friendship. He respected in it not only his old comrade but his old self. It is his old self that writes, his old self preserved in imagination as much as possible uncontaminated by the world. When he returned to his inmost privacy to write these letters, he closed the door against any sounds and sights which would be offensive to his friend and to the ideal of his own youth. The letters are indeed like pages from a journal

written by a man of imagination, who has present in his mind the memory of an innocent boyhood, a journal written always in some quiet hour on the same day of the week, written always in the same mood and in some accustomed and half-sacred spot. He took a melancholy pleasure in comparing his actual life with what it might have been had he lived in faithful submission to a spiritual, supersensual, authoritative law, a humble Christian. The passage just quoted is one of a few in which he opens the window a little and hearkens to the complex roar of the street, while engaged in these solemn contemplations. It was not for him, indeed, to shut his ears to this. He might envy Barbe the simplicity of a devout life, but him no intellectual boundaries could confine. He was destined to grow wise, not by accepting and practising some rule of faith and obedience, but by assimilating, one after another, the influences of his time.

"It is remarkable," he writes in 1833, "how, as we advance in life, if we let ourselves go without resisting, we appreciate more and more a greater number of beings and objects, of individuals and works, which had once seemed to us lacking in certain conditions that we deemed indispensable, in the fervour of our early systematic beliefs. The resources of creation, whether it be God creating in nature or man creating in art, are so complex and mysterious that if we seek diligently, some new composition always comes along to upset our formulas and

disturb our methodical arrangements. It is a flower, a plant, which does not belong in the families already described; it is a poet whom our theory of poetics did not embrace. The day when we at last comprehend this new poet, this new flower, when it exists for us in the world about us, when we grasp its fitness, its harmony with other things, its beauty, which inattention or perhaps some prejudice had veiled hitherto—that day is sweet and fruitful; it is not a day lost among our days; the esteem that we thus more widely and fairly distribute is not necessarily stolen from the superior and inaccessible admirations we cherished before."

This is a characteristic passage, more characteristic of the whole man and of his whole life than the guarded phrases in his correspondence with Barbe. Even criticism was not yet, for many years, to become his chief concern, or at least to be acknowledged to himself as such. So late as 1839 he could profess that his critical work was done in the spirit of a lyrical artist, that it was no more than a timely utterance which gave his thought relief. His *Portraits*, he says, are an outgrowth of the elegiac and romantic side of his nature rather than criticisms. This is so true that "if in reprinting some day the *Critiques* and *Portraits* they should be arranged in alphabetical order, it would be a mistake; the true order is that in which I wrote them, according to my emotion and my caprice, and always in the particular shade of feeling in which I was

at the time". Referring later to the same subject, he declares that he had always chosen, as far as possible, as subjects for the *Portraits*, persons who possessed a certain poetical side, or at least a certain charm.

After the Cénacle, the Saint-Simonists, and Lamennais, he frequented a circle which was probably more useful to him as a historian of literature than any of them, and, despite his bourgeois nature, more congenial, because more ancient, more established, more definite. In the words of Count d'Haussonville,* "he became little by little the assiduous guest of the too rare salons where the old legitimist society of the Restoration was united with that which the government of July had brought into power. He could be seen, polite and amiable, at Count Molé's, at Madame de Boigne's, at the Chancellor Pasquier's; he even found his way into those more exclusively doctrinaire salons of which he spoke so haughtily just after the revolution of 1830. In the latter as in the former he was appreciated at his high value, and he probably felt more at home in the midst of this elegant and refined society than among his former friends of the Cénacle."

* This passage in D'Haussonville refers to a later period, in the forties, but is also applicable here, for these relations began in the thirties.

Here he saw much of Mérimée and Montalembert. It was thus that he entered once more into relations with Rémusat and others of his old *Globe* colleagues, whose elevation to public office had at one time awakened in him feelings of bitterness. Even Guizot, Villemain, and Cousin, the chiefs of the doctrinaire group, or party of theoretical compromise, against some of whom, particularly Cousin, he had launched his denunciations, he now more than tolerated. Not that he surrendered his liberty of judgment or compromised his dignity. He found in these men and in the families of ancient lineage with which they were connected a riper, more traditional culture; with them he breathed an atmosphere full of literary memories; anecdotes of the old régime, of the emigration, of the Empire, were still afloat in that society. He could there observe how the possession of political power affects theory, how birth affects manners, how wealth affects morals. For the man who was to write the *Causeries du Lundi* and the *Nouveaux Lundis*, this was an invaluable experience. D'Haussonville, having in mind the use Sainte-Beuve afterwards made of the knowledge he thus acquired about persons dear to the aristocratic world and screened from publicity by that world, remarks that this was the last

phase of his humiliation before his cruel revenge. "Yet," he adds, "this new existence never for an instant distracted Sainte-Beuve from his literary occupations. It was his boast, as it was indeed his honour, to have been all his life a stubborn and indefatigable worker. He continued without intermission the series of his *Portraits*, gradually bringing his most illustrious contemporaries into the lengthening gallery. Into the articles he devoted to the men whom circumstances were making prominent, none of the gall and bitterness filtered which were to overflow later, as from a long-closed reservoir."

Various attempts were made by himself and his acquaintances to find a professorship for Sainte-Beuve. In 1828 he wrote to Loudierre, a friend of his boyhood, that, notwithstanding his horror of provincial life, he thought he should accept a post at Besançon which Jouffroy was trying to secure for him. In 1833 he debates the question in a new form, doubting whether he could reconcile the grave, continued, studious life of a teacher with his artistic faculties and ambitions; politically too, he says, it would be a hard rub for him to submit his name to certain men otherwise than by throwing it down before them as a challenge of irrevocable hostility. Yet we have seen that

he suppressed this hostility, for the men he meant were Guizot, Villemain, and Cousin; though in 1837, when they were in power, he was consistent enough to decline the cross of chevalier of the Legion of Honour. In 1834 he mentions to Ampère his desire to be attached to the École Normale, a desire, he says, which his best political friends, Leroux and others, regard as a surrender to the doctrinaires.

Experience of the world came to him chiefly through reading and personal relations. He was not much of a traveller. In 1828 he was for a short time in England. On November 9, 1829, he wrote: "I have just returned from a short trip in Germany," where he had visited some of the chief cities of the South, in company with the painter, Louis Boulanger. He was to reside and to teach, as we shall see, in Belgium and Switzerland, and he visited Italy in 1839. He made several journeys to Lyons, to enjoy the society of his friend Collombet; he visited Victor Pavie, a former member of the Cénacle, who was a printer, publisher, and poet, at Angers; he made considerable use of the library of the city of Troyes. Between 1828 and 1837 the field of his journalistic activity was greatly enlarged. On April 23, 1829, he tells a correspondent: "I am writing for the *Revue de Paris*. It is a rather heterogeneous

collection. One signs one's name in full, and consequently one is responsible only for one's own writings. The pay is good, two hundred francs a sheet; between you and me, that's what decided me. I intend to work on seventeenth century subjects there." In 1831 Buloz invited him to write for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, of which he soon became, in his own words, "one of the most active and useful" editors. The longest and most elaborate of his articles in the *Revue de Paris* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes* were collected in five volumes, which appeared between 1832 and 1839, under the title of *Critiques et Portraits littéraires*.

Meanwhile, his life in Paris was bravely independent. He lived economically, with his mother. His earnings were small but sufficient. He had hardly begun to gratify his only extravagant taste, a desire to possess rare books. There were and are still many persons ill disposed to him and eager to give body to any breath of scandal against him, but his honour as a man of letters has never borne a stain from venality of any sort. Neither his hunger for friendship nor his desire for recognition could tempt him into unmerited praise. If he feared a man, he might withhold deserved censure for a time, but in the end he spoke his mind. Beauty, wealth, position appealed to

him as persuasively as to any man, but to none of these did he sell his judgments. If he had ever betrayed his trust as a man of letters, the world would have rung with the scandal; so many enemies were on the watch. The process of his development, his passing from camp to camp, from circle to circle, left behind him a trail of disappointed expectations, old friends who believed he had deserted them, and old opponents nursing the wounds he had inflicted. He had his caprices, his partialities; he made mistakes under the influence of affection or dislike; he often changed his mind about men and women, and his theories of art were constantly disintegrating and rebuilding; but of his just intentions, his moral integrity, in all that concerned criticism, there cannot be the slightest doubt. Money was the least of the many temptations that assailed his probity. He knew how to live well with little money. The intellectual frugality which is so essential a trait of his mind was matched by an equal economy in the matter of physical luxury. In both he was as remote as possible from Balzac. To Sainte-Beuve there seemed to be something of indelicacy in the use, and certainly in the display, of luxury. He was in this respect more truly French than Balzac. He reminds us of the simple, careless La Fontaine and the

austere Racine. It may be more than a fancy—it would agree well with Taine's theory of the *milieu*—if we connect this quality of temperance with the thin, light soil, the moderate fertility, the equable but not caressing climate, of the belt of land from which they all three sprang.

One expense, necessary for his work, Sainte-Beuve allowed himself: he rented an apartment in which to write and entertain guests. "I am with my mother," he wrote in 1833, "only at a certain hour in the afternoon. This is an absolutely necessary arrangement if I am to have a single morning to myself. As I almost never leave Paris, these few hours of morning work are the only sort of retreat I can get." The next year he writes to Barbe:

"Although I do not write to you, my dear Barbe, I none the less often think of you and of all the memories we have in common, memories which gain authority as they become more distant. Interruptions in my work, many every-day bonds, a thousand hindrances one after another, have prevented me from leaving Paris for more than four years, and I have not, in all that time, spent altogether more than three weeks in the country, even in the environs. . . . My exterior literary position has been improving much faster than my material situation. To tell you the truth, I only just live by my writing, and were it not that my mother contributes largely from her own resources, I could not pay the increasing and yet moderate expenses to which I have been gradually impelled. This is one of the reasons, let me whisper it to you, why I travel so little outside of Paris, and although it is not the only reason, it is not the least."

A year or two later he writes to the same correspondent:

"I am rather sad, my dear friend, even in the midst of a very busy and regular life. Humanly I am sad because there are no larger results and no considerable prospect of position or fortune. In fact, I am in this respect no better off than I was the first day of my entrance upon my career. My independence gains thereby, and I feel more and more that it is good to see men, even superior men, with a free deference and as much as possible eye to eye, on equal ground. Still, my ambition and the consciousness of possessing certain unemployed powers make me suffer. However, this is after all a source of inspiration; one's powers of observation grow sharp when restricted thus to a narrow sphere. Religiously and spiritually I suffer also from want of faith, want of fixed rule, want of pole. I have a sense of these things, but I have not these things themselves, and there are many reasons why not. I explain to myself why I have them not; I analyse all that; and when the analysis is made, I am still farther from having them. This is a sorrow indeed, and it goes along with the other. A well-grounded faith would cure both. The more I think about it, the more (unless a divine change should come, a flash of light)—the more I believe myself capable only of an eclectic Christianity, if I may venture to say so; choosing from Catholicism, Pietism, Jansenism, Martinism. But what shall I do, under this vast, limitless cloud?"

CHAPTER V

PORT-ROYAL

In December, 1834, Sainte-Beuve wrote to Ampère that he had taken into his embrace the study of Port-Royal and its holy hermits. On the first of February following, he reported to Barbe the conception of a great purpose:

"The thing for me to do now is to make some good use of the literary means and instruments at my disposal, to make a better and better application of my time and of my mind; and it is what I shall try to do. I am occupied at this moment with a literary history of Port-Royal and of the recluses attached to it. This would be a fair share of the literary history of the seventeenth century, if I brought in Racine, Despréaux even, Madame de Sévigné a little, and spoke, on occasion, of Bossuet and Fénelon, who bore relations to Jansenism, though contradictory, to be sure. I hope to be well along in this work by the end of the year, despite frequent interruptions by other tasks, reviewing and so forth. As for the newspapers, I have given them up entirely, and shall never go back to them."

It has become traditional for the biographers of Sainte-Beuve to seek in his amours the motives of his literary ambition. Particularly at this juncture, they insist that heart-sickness at the failure of an impossible and dis-

honourable suit moved him to retire from old companions and accustomed tasks and welcome the austerity of such a subject. They almost go so far as to take for granted that the religious nature of the material appealed to him because he was at the time stirred by amorous emotions; as who should say that a general "run-down" condition renders a man specially susceptible to typhoid fever. Substantive proof of their assertions and innuendoes can scarcely be said to exist, and it is certainly the case that other and stronger reasons lie nearer hand. His lyrical vein was thin; he was realising how thin and how deceptive. The author of *Volupté* could hardly regard himself as a promising novelist. The day was still far distant when he at last was to resign himself to be, for the rest of his life, a writer of detached criticisms. He regretted the dissipation of his time; he regarded with dismay the waste of his energy in ephemeral tasks. He desired, both for the sake of his fame and for another and nobler reason, to dedicate himself to a large and useful work, to some undertaking which should employ all his powers. Scholarly penetration, constructive energy, poetical insight—he was conscious of possessing these advantages, and the desire to create was strong within him. He had not

yet reached the age when a merely objective interest sufficed. His nature was still sympathetic, capable of taking sides and feeling the joy of combat. He therefore desired to find a subject which should correspond to his inner needs, a subject in which he could, even if only by indirect means, involve his whole personality.

It is absurd to assert, as some have asserted, that Sainte-Beuve was not a religious man. It would be blinding ourselves to many important facts for the sake of mere facility, to insist forever that because he was, at bottom, an agnostic, he therefore had no religious hopes and interests, and no longings for positive Christian faith. His *Port-Royal* is by no means a purely objective work. It was not written with complete detachment, as a modern scholar might describe the Eleusinian mysteries or the cult of Isis and Osiris. After all, he never really was an absolutely objective and dispassionate critic, even in his later years, although no other human being, perhaps, approached so near that mark of perfection, if it be perfection. It is only when speaking comparatively that one can properly term him an untarnished mirror. And particularly before the year 1840 it is necessary to take into account his lyrical exaltation. A different

view, which embraces much truth but should not be held too exclusively, is that he renounced Christianity against light and against conviction, and with direful consequence to his moral nature, because of worldly and fleshly temptations, "convinced, but not converted", as Vinet declared. *Port-Royal* is the arena of a prolonged conflict in which heart and sense, conscience and intellect, were all engaged, every spiritual power stretched to the uttermost. The trampled earth is stained with his soul's blood; and if after that struggle the pale gladiator renounced Christianity, none but the blindest apologists can declare that lust was the only lion in his path. For he wrestled there in mortal agony with earth-giants, Montaigne, Descartes, Leibnitz, and with athletes of faith, Augustine, Pascal, Arnauld, and there too he was soothed by the softer persuasions of holy hermit lives which appealed to his finest instincts.

The inner call to write *Port-Royal* was therefore in part a noble literary ambition and in part an imperious demand to try the issues of thought. Moreover, it is true that he was tired of Paris and of his life there. The city was a graveyard of his old friendships. He was still suffering acutely from the melancholy end of his relations with the Hugo family. There

was soreness in the very sight of Lamennais. He was distressed by the trend of politics. His association with wealthy people was making it harder than ever for him to support himself, even by the most exhausting toil. He craved a change of scene. The health of his mind depended upon a retempering of mental habit. There are times when the nervous tension of prolonged work, accompanied by irritating personal contacts, becomes insupportable. To see the same faces every day, to be obliged to keep the same countenance, appears maddening when the mind has grown stale. Sainte-Beuve had lived too exclusively the life of Paris. Its personalities, its quarrels, its prejudices, were now irksome. He must see Paris from without, France from without, or else lose all sense of perspective. Switzerland, and particularly the southwestern cantons, appealed to him, as being French and not French.

Then came the external call. In July, 1837, he visited Geneva, partly for the purpose of conferring with Mademoiselle Christine de Fontanes in regard to the publication of her father's works. He spent several weeks at this time travelling through the country, finding repose at Aigle with two young poets, Juste Olivier, professor of history at the Academy

of Lausanne, and his accomplished wife. Rural life, beauty of scenery, freedom, pure air and fresh impressions, the severity and serenity of Swiss Protestantism, intimacy with a faithful and happy married couple, combined to invigorate and charm the weary man. He confided to the Oliviers his project of writing a history of Port-Royal. They applauded it, and suggested his giving a course of lectures on that subject in the Academy or embryo university of Lausanne. Owing to their efforts and the extent of his own reputation, he presently received an official invitation to teach there an entire academic year. He was to lecture three times a week, and his salary, paid by the state, was to be about half as much again as that of a regular professor.

Before returning to Paris after the summer of 1837, he acquainted himself, in a remarkably short time, with the spirit of the literature of French-speaking Switzerland, and sent to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* a sympathetic article on Vinet, the eminent Swiss man of letters. This was more than a polite salutation to Lausanne and a bid for favour. It was, characteristically, a submission of his mind to new influences, an honest attempt to understand. Vinet was a theologian as well as a literary critic, and in this article Sainte-Beuve

studies the Protestant religion. He looks for the good in it, picking out its points of similarity or superiority to Catholicism.

The good Oliviers had urged him to come to Switzerland, with the avowed purpose of trying to save his soul. Juste Olivier, who was three years younger than Sainte-Beuve, was appointed professor of belles-lettres and history at the gymnasium of Neuchâtel in 1829, and had spent the first six months of 1830 in Paris, preparing for his work. He had there called on Sainte-Beuve, whom he described in his journal as a man of "medium height and irregular features, his head pale, round, almost too big for his body, his nose large and ill-made, his eyes light-blue and of variable size, seeming at times to grow larger, his hair pale red, very abundant, and at once stiff and fine. In short, M. Sainte-Beuve is not handsome nor even good-looking, though his face is not disagreeable and even pleases one after a while." On the strength of what must have been a very slight acquaintance, Olivier sent the critic, in February, 1835, a volume of poetry which he and his wife had published, together with an enthusiastic letter setting forth the attractions of their summer châlet in the mountains and urging him to visit them. It was not till September 18 that Sainte-Beuve

answered this letter. He then apologised for his cruelty; and indeed, the amiable young poets must have suffered from his neglect. He mentioned his project of treating Port-Royal, but held out only a slight prospect of going to Switzerland. However, as we have seen, he soon afterwards made up his mind, and availed himself of their hospitality. They learned enough of his inner struggles to feel justified in addressing him as follows, after his summer visit:

"Does not everything depend, after all, on knowing for what you live and wish to live? It is primarily a moral choice you are going to make. Unless I am mistaken, your conscience has told you that if you retire from the crowd to examine the great problem of destiny, you will be led to find God and accept him. . . . Your *literary* conscience, if I may so express myself, speaks to you in much the same language. It shows you very clearly the advantages of a long task, austere and useful. . . . . I venture therefore to urge you, advise you, even conjure you, to reflect well before you say no, if you are inclining that way."

The naïve earnestness of this appeal may well have touched him. He acknowledged the sickness of his soul and his longing to find health in their society. And in the middle of October, 1837, he arrived at Lausanne with an enormous box of books on the subject of his course. To preserve his time from interruption, he took a room at the Hôtel de l'Angleterre,

then situated in the Rue Saint Pierre, where it was his habit to work till late in the afternoon, when, after his lecture-hour, he would go with the Oliviers to their house in the Rue de Martheray, and receive callers or read poetry or discuss serious questions. The course began on November 6. He wrote his lectures, but tried, in delivering them, to improvise occasionally. His voice was not strong; he was not accustomed to public speaking; his audiences were very large and of mixed composition, including the most intellectual persons of the town and curiosity-seekers old and young; but he attacked his task manfully, and in eighty-one lectures not only satisfied the local requirements, but laid the basis for a huge historical work, the bulkiest and, in the opinion of many readers, the most substantial product of his pen. It may be that his *Port-Royal* will retain vitality when his critical essays have ceased to be read. Up to the present time, however, it has not been so intimately associated with his fame. It appeared in five large octavo volumes, containing altogether nearly three thousand pages: volume I in 1840, volume II in 1842, volume III in 1848, and volumes IV and V in 1859. Its subject, which attracted him by its supposed definiteness, turned out, like every other subject in

history or philosophy, to be infinitely complex. The quiet cell in which he expected to ponder had windows, however narrow, which looked out upon the multifarious life of men and up to the mysterious heavens. Even in the most restricted sense, as a history, the subject was not simple.

As to its importance, there can be no question. His choice was ably vindicated by Renan in an article printed August 28, 1860, the first of three in which the historian of religion reviewed *Port-Royal*. Renan says:

"M. Sainte-Beuve has just finished his noble history of Port-Royal. Many persons have shown surprise at the preference of the ingenious critic for a subject which seems remote from his habitual predilections. They have not remembered the secret cords which bind together all the applications of the human spirit, and in particular they have formed an insufficient idea of M. Sainte-Beuve's talent. The depth of observation and the taste for the great studies of the soul which distinguish the illustrious academician were bound to lead him towards religious history, a field which shows human nature in its rarest and most curious moods. Now, in religious history there are few subjects so attractive to a philosophical historian as Port-Royal. That abortive attempt to reform French Catholicism is full of lessons and examples. . . . The perfection of M. Sainte-Beuve's treatment of his subject is, however, the best justification of his choice. The skilful historian has never painted a picture more finished, more living, more complete in its thousand details. What assures for M. Sainte-Beuve a place apart among the critics of our century is the high philosophy which under-

lies all his judgments. He is careful not to reveal this philosophy, for he knows too well the secrets of his art ever to enclose his theory of the universe in a definite formula."

As to the existence of this "high philosophy" in Sainte-Beuve, we may be permitted to entertain a serious doubt, and Renan came nearer the mark when he added that "the special taste of M. Sainte-Beuve inclines him to take men, rather than the abstract march of events, as the framework of his studies".

In the confused times of the Fronde, there sprang up in France a type of religion, not merely of theology, but of religion, of spiritual life, which was destined to exist throughout the reign of Louis XIV as a stubborn contradiction to the dominant ideals. The visible beginning of this movement was the retirement of a few devout women to a monastic house, Port-Royal des Champs, a few miles from Paris. They were, for the most part, of high birth and strong character. One by one a group of serious intellectual men sought seclusion in the vicinity of this house. A second Port-Royal was founded in the capital itself. Schools were instituted, new methods of teaching were developed, and text-books superior to any others then existing were written on many subjects. There was singular unity of spirit in all these undertakings. The

source of this unity was a fresh interpretation of certain theological ideas, developed by Jansenius, a Flemish scholar, and by Saint-Cyran, a Frenchman, who found in the writings of Augustine, and behind Augustine in St. Paul, the doctrines of predestination and grace. Blaise Pascal, after struggling against the dictates of his conscience, yielded finally to its appeal and to the attraction of Port-Royal, where he found congenial spirits. He became associated with them forevermore through his *Lettres à un Provincial*, written in their defence. Racine was a child of the house, brought up by its kindly care and educated in its excellent schools. Descartes and Leibnitz were related in manifold ways to the men and the teachings of the community. Boileau was affected by them, and mentioned them with honour in his writings. Bossuet respected them. Some of the ablest state officials were trained in the Port-Royal schools. The daughters of many great middle-class and noble houses took the veil at Port-Royal. Nearly the whole of one large family, the Arnaulds, eminent in the legal profession and notable for originality and energy, was converted, member after member, in startling ways, and emptied itself into those cold cells and severe gardens.

The literary activity of the Port-Royalists, both men and women, was enormous. Not to mention almost numberless works of controversy, they translated the Bible and many Greek and Latin books, carried on the task of the Renaissance by modernising the methods of teaching grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy, published a treatise on logic which was authoritative for one hundred and fifty years in Europe and America, revived the study of early Church fathers, provoked a fresh investigation of Protestant writers, and left behind them a vast accumulation of biographies. However they might wish to hide their lives, they were unwilling that their memory should die. We owe to Port-Royal much of the gravity, restraint, and nobility of Racine's plays, and indeed a large share of the gravity, restraint, and nobility that dignify the literature of the whole era in France.

But the doctrines of Port-Royal and the spiritual abasement, not to say terror, which they inspired were out of harmony with the worldliness of the age. Nor could the King tolerate a rival allegiance so unquestioning and direct as the submission to Christ which the Port-Royalists practised and taught. To quote Renan again:

"Here, from the very heart of the French middle class, represented by several enlightened and serious old Parisian families, a resisting power was born. The nuns of

Port-Royal did more than the bishops, more than the Gallican Church, more than the Pope: they kept a clear conscience. With his seraglio insolently set up before the very face of Christendom, Louis XIV, as far as in him lay, brought French morality down to within a hand's-breadth of the morality of the Orient. Happily, there were women to resist him. That admirable sentence, 'The King can make princes of the blood-royal; he can make martyrs too,' is the revenge of French womanhood for the insult it received at Versailles. Port-Royal is thus the only internal stumbling-block the all-powerful King encountered, the only voice that protested against the encroachments of the administration in the realm of the spirit."

The King was not more alarmed than his Jesuit confessors. From the first they were hostile to the movement, which, under the name of Jansenism, soon gained headway in France and in Flanders. The doctrine of divine grace was contrary to their accommodating system of works. It was, moreover, a part of their function as the choice instrument of the papacy to detect and oppose any centrifugal movement in the Church. The spirit of Port-Royal encouraged such a profound awakening of the sense of individual responsibility before God as might lead to the exercise of private judgment and a revolt against authority. On its face, the movement looked like an approach to Calvinism. Had not the Genevan and the Scottish reformers founded their system too upon Augustine? And, most real

danger of all, the Jansenist theology and the Port-Royal system were national in character, and found favour with the Gallican party in France. Bishops of this party protected the Jansenist writers, and gave ecclesiastical sanction to the Port-Royal undertakings. To check the independent, national co-operation of these bishops was the peculiar office of the Society of Jesus in France.

Thus Port-Royal found itself caught between the centralising power of the King and the ultramontane policy of the order which prevailed alike with King and Pope, a policy which was the only great organised opposition to that process of centralisation. The adherents to Port-Royal were subjected to many persecutions. Their books were confiscated, their leaders imprisoned and driven into exile. Two remarkable occurrences checked their decline: a supposed miraculous cure of a supposed fistula in a child's eyelid,* and the publication of Pascal's *Lettres à un Provincial*. And yet in these two events were contained the elements of Port-Royal's downfall: inwardly the decline of enthusiasm into superstition, and outwardly a final provocation of the

* Called the miracle of the holy thorn, because the cure was thought to have been effected by touching the sore with a relic from the crown of thorns.

unrelenting resentment and fury of the Jesuit order. Not all its virtue and learning could save it. Friends at court, and it had many grateful sons in high places, dared not plead for it with the King, who was resolved upon its destruction. The schools were broken up, the admission of novices to the two nunneries was forbidden, *ces messieurs* were driven from their hermitages around Port-Royal des Champs, and finally, in 1709, the few faithful old women who continued to resist the commands of the Archbishop of Paris were forcibly ejected from their refuge and distributed in religious houses throughout the country. Then the buildings of Port-Royal des Champs were demolished, and the bones of the dead were dug up and carted away. So fell the moral citadel of France.

Such, in brief, is the story which Sainte-Beuve set out to amplify. But he soon found, as he lectured, that the arid theological part, concerning the dogmatic writings of Jansenius and Saint-Cyran, was dull work with the younger half of his audience, while its bearing on Calvinism rendered it a delicate subject to unfold before the older members of a Protestant Swiss community. He was glad, therefore, to avail himself of the many natural outlets upon wider fields which his general theme

afforded. The chief of these is an elaborate system of references to Montaigne, whom he accepts as a representative of the natural man, setting him against Pascal, the champion of Christian faith. There are other digressions which are less easily justified by essential connection with the main subject. But generally the work is enriched by these voluntary passages, and because of them it is almost a history of French literature in the reign of Louis XIV.

Apart from certain defects in the first two volumes, Sainte-Beuve's *Port-Royal* is a complete artistic success. Traces of its origin as lectures, and as lectures in a foreign country and to an audience whose religious prejudices had to be considered, mar the first volume especially. The tone there is too apologetic, and the style too florid. Several of the digressions were too evidently intended to arouse flagging attention. His language at first is almost too figurative. It was always full-blooded; never, to use a lively expression of Montaigne, *exsangue*, *descharnée*. But from the beginning, from the *Tableau historique* down to about 1840, it was often encumbered with half-formed or overdressed images, and the contrast is very marked between this early style in the second volume of *Port-Royal* and

the later style, quick, free, and yet quite as picturesque, which appears for almost the first time in volume third. Good French prose is, as a rule, much more full of imagery than modern English prose. We have to go back to writers before Dryden to find many English examples of such liberty as the best French writers constantly take. Sir Thomas Browne and Jeremy Taylor expressed themselves, even in detail, by picture. They were not afraid of mixed metaphors, nor were Sidney and Hooker and Bacon. Imagery was the very tissue of their thought. It is worth observing that when English prose, from Dryden to Johnson, was most affected by French style, the latter had only temporarily ceased to be rich in figurative detail. A page of Montaigne is like a window of old stained glass filled with many bright and variegated little scenes. Even in the age of abstractions, a page of Saint-Simon possesses the same opulence of colour.

French prose-writers of the nineteenth century regained the mastery of this art, which was never quite lost, and none succeeded better than Sainte-Beuve in enlivening their style by passing almost all their conceptions through a concrete medium of many hues. In his mature age he did this unobtrusively, economising his

more obvious and elaborate similes; but the tissue of his style is a mass of figures nevertheless. In all that he published before going to Lausanne and in the first two volumes of *Port-Royal* he shows that he has not yet achieved perfection in this respect. There are too many deliberate and highly wrought metaphors. There is often an exuberance which passes the bounds of good taste. He had at this time a fondness for expansion, for the rhetorical development of a point, for repetition and emphasis, which betrays an inward weakness. He was unwilling to rely upon the inherent force of a true statement. He appears to have cultivated a lyrical effusiveness which is a quite different quality from imaginative vigour. And of course this bad habit broke out most dangerously in spoken discourse, and all the more because he had not the confidence which might have come with fuller acquaintance with his audience. He prolonged his expositions, he sought painfully for words and phrases, he wound himself up in long sentences. We are too often reminded of the fact that he was a trained rhetorician, the author of those school-boy exercises that have been mentioned in a previous chapter. We realise that after all he was not much older than when he wrote the *Tableau historique*.

It seems almost ungracious to add that he was not free from certain small pedantries. In his ripe years he was so nobly free from them that it may be rather instructive than impertinent to remark the few bad literary traits which he had to overcome. There are passages in the first volume of *Port-Royal*, and particularly footnotes, introduced apparently to air his newly acquired acquaintance with early Christian saints and fathers, or to give excuse for a quotation from Cicero. The reader wearies of St. Anthony and the Thebaid, St. Jerome, St. Basil, St. Gregory, St. Ephrem, St. Eucher, St. Paulinus, and Sulpicius Severus. Of a certain more odious and ill-smelling kind of pedantry Sainte-Beuve was never guilty: he never tried to show, by the facile use of the cant terms of scholarship, that he was up with the very latest literature on a subject. He did not give undue preference to the most recent or the most difficult book, nor flaunt in his reader's face the last trivial discovery. The self-complacency, the scorn of others, the chicanery over novelties and trifles, which are not infrequent among philologists of the second rank, he was miles above, though no man could be more punctilious about details.

To have done once for all with objections of this sort, it may be remarked that, with all

good will, most readers must find some of the digressions in the first volume arbitrary and tedious. There is an analysis of Corneille's *Polyeucte* which would be a good exercise for a class in rhetoric, but is entirely out of place in a history of Port-Royal. The digression on François de Sales, though interesting, is out of proportion. The account of Mother Angélique is cloying in its fullness, and must have been a strain on the author's sincerity. Her religious experiences were of the utmost importance for the future of Port-Royal, but it is carrying an appearance of impartiality too far when he refrains from such comment on fanaticism as an enlightened modern man must feel impelled to make. It affects one like false modesty. Considerable ingenuity and some sheer force were required to establish an actual relation between La Rochefoucauld and Jansenism. And the long digression on Molière, by means of an unproved connection between the *Provinciales* and *Tartufe*, is no more than a series of independent *Causeries*. Sainte-Beuve was aware of his audacity, and attempted to anticipate criticism. He excuses his digression on Vauvenargues and his comparison of this eighteenth century moralist with the rather shadowy Port-Royal father, M. de Séricourt, as follows:

"I have allowed myself to be drawn aside for a moment by Vauvenargues. If one dwells long within the limits of any subject, one soon finds it like a town full of friends, and can scarcely take a step in the main street without being at once accosted and asked to come in at this house or at that. Even if one does not always yield, it is becoming to give way now and then."

And in another place he remarks, with a touch of temper: "Let me say it once for all—if Port-Royal should be for me only an occasion, a method, for traversing the epoch, and if this should be noticed, there would be no harm done." Nevertheless, and the tone of his remark shows that he felt the danger, this work, which as a whole is nobly planned and admirably executed, and whose unity is one of its best qualities, came near being ruined, at first, before the author shook off the habits of an essayist and learned the procedure of a historian. It does not begin to advance with the steady onward pace of a history until well down in the second volume.

Apart from these few considerations, there can be nothing but applause for the abnegation and industry with which Sainte-Beuve dilates on the dull and stubborn parts of his subject, clearing the way, at whatever risk of tiring his audience, until he reaches the wonderful book on Montaigne and Pascal, where he grapples with the central problems of his subject.

It has often been remarked that the spiritual unity of the work is impaired by a change of temper perceptible in the last two volumes, published in 1859. Sainte-Beuve, we are told, lost interest in his task. It is assumed that he was, for a time, in close religious sympathy with the subject, and that the withdrawing tide of faith removed it beyond his reach. I am unable to see any such decline of artistic interest as would warrant the criticism. If there be anticlimax, it is in the nature of the subject. The real Port-Royal reached its climax at the publication of the *Provinciales;* the catastrophe was long dragged out and wanting in grandeur. Sainte-Beuve gives exactly this impression of a gradual decline and extinction, and in so doing he follows the facts. He realised that he must work in the spirit of his theme. He found, as he proceeded, that the material was far more copious than he had supposed. And after his voluntary excursions into neighbouring territory, he discovered the unwelcome necessity of studying many stony patches that lay in the very heart of his chosen field. It would have been comparatively easy for him to approach each of these in a critical spirit, but his purpose was to construct, not to destroy. The prime essential, therefore, was to preserve the same attitude

from first to last. He must get at the heart of the Port-Royal mystery and work from the centre. An inquiry into his real state of mind will be in place later: that is, whether he was at all points sincere in his cordiality, and in how far he yielded to a certain opportunism. For the moment, however, it is enough to note that he bore to his subject exactly the right attitude to ensure artistic success. He does not, of course, admit even tacitly the miraculous cures. He exposes them, as a modern physician is bound to do, and in precise medical terms. But he does not smile at the credulity which made them acceptable in the seventeenth century. Despite his affection for François de Sales, who appealed to him in a character towards which he always had a leaning, the character of a refined and charitable priest, he gives the Jesuits the rôle of villain which is dramatically necessary. As a matter of fact, this was their rôle historically too, with reference to Port-Royal.

His subject was very broad. It involved many aspects of life and many and varied qualities of mind. It demanded an author who had been trained in the Catholic religion, but who was nevertheless detached from the Church. He must be learned in ecclesiastical history, strong in theology, acquainted with

scholastic philosophy and also with the systems of Descartes, Leibnitz, Malebranche, and Spinoza. He had especially to possess that intimate knowledge of seventeenth century memoirs and letters, that almost personal familiarity with the eminent men and women of the age, which Sainte-Beuve possessed in a greater degree than any other student. And Sainte-Beuve brought to his task the further and indispensable advantage of appreciating the literature of that time, both in itself and in its origin and points of contact with foreign culture. In all, however, what chiefly shines is his marvellous gift for analysing character. The collective character of Port-Royal itself he also seized. He found in its humility, its intelligence, its austere self-repression, a certain poetry, which he savoured with tranquil delight. Speaking of the private devotions of Mother Angélique in a period of persecution, he exclaims: "If I, profane and once a poet, who look for poetry in all things and even (need I say it?) in religion, if I sometimes find it in Port-Royal, it is such as we have just discovered and none other, a poesy without sun or bloom, wholly internal and naught but fragrance."

As to the breadth of the subject with respect to the number and variety of topics involved,

it is bewildering, but admirably compassed by the author. In the first place, Sainte-Beuve keeps before his mind a standard of Catholic orthodoxy. The fathers, the councils, the papal decrees, the liturgy, and the common practice of ages determine this for him. One may say that the only source he neglects is the gospels. Then he considers Augustine's interpretation of the Catholic faith, and particularly the doctrines of grace and predestination which Jansenius and Saint-Cyran found in Augustine and made the centre of their system. He contrasts this system with the semi-Pelagianism which found favour with the Jesuits and certain Protestant sects, and investigates its points of contact with Calvinism. He traces the connection between dogma and conduct, as shown in the Jesuit books of casuistry on the one hand and in the asceticism of the Jansenists on the other. Taking a wider circle, he compares the worldly and the other-worldly ideals which clashed so openly in the age of Louis XIV. Secularity is forced to plead its cause against asceticism. From Epictetus to Montaigne and from Montaigne to Molière, the *religion des honnêtes gens*, the religion of worldly experience and common sense, the religion that enjoins acceptance of life as it is, in a determination to make the

best of it, is tested by the religion of those who carry to its extreme issue the injunction to walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

Full justice is done to the grand purity of motive and morals which Port-Royal maintained in the face of a corrupt generation. Much light is thrown upon the nature of religious experience. Conviction of sin, conversion, penance, the ideal of holiness, are viewed through the eyes of Arnauld, Le Maître, Saci, and the sublime mothers of Port-Royal. Nevertheless, the cause of humanism, the effort of the sixteenth century to universalise Christianity, the meaning of Montaigne, are fully comprehended; and confessedly it is only by excluding the pre-Christian and extra-Christian world and the spirit of the Renaissance that Sainte-Beuve forces himself to breathe the air of orthodoxy. He moved in a closer area than would have been necessary thirty years later. Historical criticism of the Bible was even then beginning to make known widely the incongruity between orthodoxy and the teachings of Jesus; and the theory of evolution has rendered purely figurative and symbolical the once formidable concatenation—fall of man, total depravity, and necessity of saving grace, with the corollary, predestination. But as yet Sainte-Beuve ostensibly recognised the limits

fixed in the fourth century and merely enlarged by the humanists of the sixteenth.

One page from the work will give some idea of the breadth of treatment which was possible even in 1840:

"In the seventeenth century the highest elevation in religious truth consisted in believing that human nature was fallen, evil, full of those original vices which, according to Saint-Cyran's vigorous expression, soil the soul and *defame* it before God, and in adoring only the unique and sovereign efficacy of grace. Molière, La Rochefoucauld, and La Bruyère were inclined to hold the first of these views, but not the second, to which they were not much affected. They took the evil and neglected the remedy. They ridiculed more or less gaily, they dissected more or less cruelly human nature thus regarded. However, they do this only in the details and in application, without erecting a complete philosophical system over against Christianity. In the eighteenth century this further step is taken. Fontenelle, Montesquieu, Voltaire, from the beginning, were ironical observers; and more than that, they not only neglect religion, they attack it directly. A parallel system is formed, in which they and others co-operate, and which Jean-Jacques Rousseau pushes to its limit. Soon the highest spiritual elevation in the eighteenth century consists (in opposition to the high religion of the seventeenth) in believing human nature to be essentially good when unspoiled by society, in respecting it, in proclaiming that conscience is loyal and upright if we consult it directly, and in maintaining that the free soul is capable of choosing the good. It is religious (at least relatively) to believe that; and irreligion consists in the negation of free will, and in holding to a sort of predestination, physical and material, but not, of course, predestination by grace. What contrasts and

what oppositions! In this welter of human opinions, as at the shore of the sea, I gaze upon the ebb and flow. Who shall state their law?"

In bringing out such oppositions and viewing the problem of religious belief from alternating points lies the ultimate value of the book. For a better history of Port-Royal may conceivably be written in the future, but never again shall any one be able to discuss these questions in a closed field, as Sainte-Beuve was obliged to discuss them. The conditions of the debate, the premises of the argument, have been removed. It is no longer possible to assume that man is a fallen creature, and the assumption of a supernatural revelation would not so certainly now be made, for argument's sake, by a historian in Sainte-Beuve's position. If Pascal's denunciation of human nature could be met in 1840, less terror glares from it now. The formularies of theology have not changed, but enlightened opinion has simply stepped over them; and half of Sainte-Beuve's labour would be unnecessary to-day, if we may regard his book as anything except pure history. Confessedly, however, it was more than history to him; there was an argumentative side.

Epictetus and Montaigne, he contends, may be taken as the file-leaders of two series which

comprise all philosophers. Under the former are ranged the Stoics, Pelagians, Socinians, deists; those who trust in conscience, like Rousseau; in the moral sentiment, like the Scottish school; in pure reason, like Kant; and those who are simply and humbly psychologists, like the dominant French philosophers in the nineteenth century. These all, in spite of themselves, fall into place under Epictetus, in that they rest upon the Ego. In Montaigne's squad, on the other hand, are found all those who have not faith in the moral greatness of man, in conscience one and distinct, and not only the pure sceptics, like Bayle and Hume, but all the others who invalidate man and contest the worth of his central and presiding Ego—empirical materialists, like Gassendi; atheists, like Hobbes; naturalists, like D'Alembert; pantheists and Spinozists, like Diderot. The pantheists and Spinozists, whom he assigns to Montaigne, join hands with the Stoics, thus completing the circle of the systems.

And then he pictures Pascal, mustering both these companies and finding neither sufficient, and so turning from philosophy to religion. He cannot meet Pascal face to face in this other field; he waits till the giant has passed, and overtakes him from the rear; and

it was only thus that Pascal, clad in the panoply of all the orthodoxies, whether Catholic or Protestant, could, under the conditions, be assailed—on the practical side, by following the trail of results. Life as attempted by Port-Royal—was it feasible, was it natural? For after all, though Pascal entered the movement when it was already well under way, he may fairly be taken to represent its higher intellectual being. He is the algebraic formula of Port-Royal, the abstract law of its course. In the absence of the wider basis for argument supplied since 1840 by historical criticism and natural science, the only way to meet Pascal was to prove the inherent absurdity of the social order that exemplified his theory of human nature. Not that this ulterior purpose entered very largely into Sainte-Beuve's plan. He worked in good faith, as a historian primarily. In the notable instance of the miracle of the holy thorn, March 24, 1656, he contents himself with remarking: "The Jansenists saw in this the triumph of their cause; I see in it rather the humiliation of the human spirit." We, however, may employ this sentence as a statement of much that is contrary, not only to reason (they were not ashamed when their faith clashed with reason), but to social morality, in the lives of these recluses. If they had

had their way, the human species, unworthy of its Maker, would have perished. In the words of Mark Pattison:

"Pascal's view of human depravity seems to the ordinary man but the despair and delirium of the self-tormenting ascetic. The cynical view of our fallen nature, however, is at least a possible view. It is well that it should be explored, and it will always have its prophets, Calvin or Rochefoucauld. But to ordinary men an argument in favour of revelation founded on such an assumption will seem to be in contradiction to their daily experience."

Outside the sphere of mathematics, pure reason cannot safely be trusted to go far without frequent recourse to experience. "A logical, geometrical mind," says Sainte-Beuve of Pascal, "observant of causes, keen, clear, eloquent, he represents to me the perfection of human understanding, in all its definiteness, self-dependence, and detachment from the rest of the universe." When we read Pascal's life, together with his private letters, his *Provinciales*, and his *Pensées*, it is easy to realise, from the extraordinary distinctness of his self-hood, that he was the complement of Descartes, arriving through moral certitude at a conclusion equivalent to the conclusion reached by Descartes through a somewhat less emotional path. For "I think, therefore I am," Pascal might have substituted, "I know myself."

And from this knowledge to the apprehension of God, as another self-conscious being, the step was easy. Pascal's intense consciousness of himself and of God reminds one of J. H. Newman's remark, "From a boy, I had been led to consider that my Maker and I, his creature, were the two beings, luminously such, *in rerum natura.*" However contrary to general experience this feeling may be, it is itself an experience. Whether or not the prevalence of such a sentiment and its translation into conduct be the grand refutation of asceticism, a *reductio ad absurdum*, and in particular whether or not it expose the weakness of Port-Royal, it undoubtedly gave vitality and distinctness to the idea of God, and this idea was theistic, as distinguished from the idea Malebranche was developing from Descartes, which was pantheistic. "Pascal," remarks Sainte-Beuve, "is the least pantheistic mind that can be conceived." And why? Because he "possesses in the highest degree of intensity a sense of the human person".

But again, the endeavour of Port-Royal was not only, in the end, opposed to reason and to social morality, but, after all, to theism itself. For what presumption could be more daring than to depress (or shall we say exalt?) mankind into a titanic race, waging so successful

a war against Heaven as to defeat the divine purpose? In their vivid conception of evil and of the individuality of human souls, the Jansenists went far towards philosophic dualism. Unredeemed man appeared to them utterly cut off from God and beyond the power of God—beyond the power of God in spite of the awkward contrivance of "saving grace". For it never occurred to them that this grace might have a universal incidence; and those whom grace never reached would, like Milton's Satan, grow great in their own badness. They were carried so far from the pantheistic pole of thought as to limit the divine nature and proclaim a schism in the universe.

At the close of a penetrating and almost terrifying passage on Racine's withdrawal from his old masters, his renunciation of their cross, Sainte-Beuve goes beyond the metaphysics of the case and considers the validity of Christian ethics as exemplified in Port-Royal. Should the poet have given up his career of glory? Was it weakness or strength in him? "The terms are stated; the combat between the Christian and the natural moralists is opened. I skirt them both. I relate and exhibit; enough for me if every one perceive the point by which he may pierce to the heart of the question."

What Jansenism was can be best understood by following one of the noble spirits who retired from high worldly station to the life of prayer, silence, and toil which was led in the shadow of Port-Royal. Let us choose M. Le Maître, a representative member of the Arnauld family, and inquire what he actually gave up and what he expected to receive, what were his religious ideals, what he meant by sanctity or a holy life. The Arnauld family possessed in a high degree the qualities of fear and love, pride and humility, credulity and reason. A passionate intensity of character marked them through at least three generations. They abounded in their own excess, whether for good or ill. M. Le Maître was a grandson of M. Arnauld the advocate, and nephew of five Arnauld sisters, nuns at Port-Royal, and of Arnauld d'Andilly and Antoine Arnauld, *le grand Arnauld*, recluses. He was the brother of two eminent Jansenists, M. de Saci and M. de Séricourt, and the cousin of several other members of the Port-Royal community. He was leading an active and extremely successful life at the bar. His pleas were regarded as the highest specimens of oratory. He stood in great favour with the most eminent men of his profession, and was contemplating marriage. At the age of twenty-nine

he heard the call which sooner or later came to nearly every member of his house; and without delay or demonstration he gave up all his worldly prospects and retired. The following extracts from his letter to the Chancellor may serve to show the spirit in which the Arnaulds performed such acts. It was written in 1637.

"MONSEIGNEUR:

"God having touched me, some months ago, and caused me to resolve to change my life, I have thought that I should be wanting in the respect I owe you and that I should be guilty of ingratitude if, after having received from you so many extraordinary favours, I were to carry out so important a resolution without giving you an account of my change. I am quitting, Monseigneur, not only my profession, which you have rendered very honourable and advantageous to me, but also all that I could hope or desire in the world, and am retiring into solitude to do penance and to serve God the rest of my days, after having spent ten years in the service of men.

"I do not believe, Monseigneur, that I am bound to justify this action, since it is good in itself and necessary for a sinner like me, but I think that in order to enlighten you fully on all the rumours which may become current about me, I must disclose to you my most secret intentions and tell you that I renounce ecclesiastical offices as completely as civil preferment, that I desire not merely to change my ambition, but to have none. . . . I hope that what will seem folly before men will not be so before God, and that it will be a consolation to me in the hour of death to have followed the purest rules of the Church and the practice of so many centuries.

"If this thought comes to me because I have less intelligence or more timidity than other men, I prefer

this respectful and timorous ignorance, which has been shared by the greatest men of Christendom, to a bolder knowledge, which would be full of peril. However that may be, Monseigneur, I ask God no other favour than to live and die in his service, to have no dealings with the world either by speech or writing, and to pass my life in solitude, as if I were in a monastery."

So complete was his renunciation that he thought himself obliged not to attend his father's funeral nor to be present when his mother, shortly afterwards, took the veil. It required the authority of his spiritual adviser, M. de Saint-Cyran, to make him give up a vehement resolution not to speak to any one, and he fell back upon a less imprudent determination not to speak to any woman. Of his ardour, his life-long penitence, and a certain grace which he wore even in sackcloth and ashes, much might be said. His learning and piety contributed greatly to the education of Racine. "One of his hardest struggles," says Sainte-Beuve, "and one of his most touching trials, was when he, the proud first-born, subjected himself as a penitent to his younger brother, M. de Saci, who had become a priest and confessor." Retirement to solitude for the purpose of securing one's own salvation appears a selfish and also a quite unnecessary step, considering the opportunities the world affords for doing good to others,

with the probability of self-improvement at the same time. But if we would rightly estimate the conduct of M. Le Maître and those whom he represents, we must remember that Port-Royal was a moral oasis. Probably no other religious house in France combined, as it did, a very pure morality with strong sense and severe studies. And the memoirs of Sully, of Retz, and of Saint-Simon, to go no further, reveal the dangers and corruptions of the aristocratic society from which Port-Royal drew most of its recruits. From the license of that world, what a change to the terrible severity of M. de Saint-Cyran's guidance, which forbade the Great Arnauld to assist in administering extreme unction to his mother, because it would be "granting too much to nature"!

This acknowledged contrast attracted not only the finer spirits, but adventurous characters who were moved by a romantic wish to touch both extremes of conduct. Seldom, however, did Port-Royal fail to impress permanently those who came within its influence. Daughters of dissolute fathers, women of rank and fashion who sought a respite from dissipation, came, and were touched, converted, and transformed. The leading nuns, in many cases, were those who had spent almost their

entire lives in the convent; yet so strong was family tradition, that their letters, in elegance and practical sense, are often not greatly inferior to those of Madame de Sévigné. Mother Angélique became coadjutrix to the abbess of Port-Royal at the age of seven. She was abbess herself at eleven. Her sister, Mother Agnès, was equally a child of the convent. Yet neither was lacking in the good usages of the world, any more than in administrative capacity. Connection with the Court and with the highest ecclesiastics was almost always close. We find M. d'Andilly sending choice pears to the Queen and to Mazarin. The Queen of Poland was for a long time in correspondence with her friends in the abbey.

The pessimism of these ascetics was latent rather than apparent, for in their high opinion of the value of souls there was a real optimism. Great beyond estimate was the power of their example in a luxurious society which was turning from the looseness and barbarism of the Fronde to abject uniformity under Louis XIV. Against both these extremes Port-Royal was a living protest. Sainte-Beuve remarks that "when one catches a glimpse, in Tallemant, of the history of the fathers, grandfathers, and mothers, one is overwhelmed at the contrast between the generations; one can

better understand then all these fastings and all this repentance. The cloister is paying for the world."

Allowance being made, however, for the difference in social origins, the tone of Port-Royal is not unlike that of other high-pitched religious communities based upon a similar distrust of human nature. Less suave and poetical than the early Franciscans, and far more accomplished in theology, the Jansenists resemble them in devotion, in self-sacrifice, in cheerfulness. Like the Scottish Covenanters, they were confident in proportion as they were oppressed. Persecution aroused in both a spirit of calm independence; as earthly bonds were severed, they did not seek new ones, but turned towards eternal love. Renan observes that "experience has proved that man never develops his liberty better than when he believes himself chained by the dogma of grace". The reason for this is that he then feels detached from the world.

Besides the shining example they provided in the midst of moral darkness, the Jansenists exposed two insidious false lights, by setting their ethical absolutism against the relative sliding scale of the Jesuits, and exalting Christian charity above the code of honour, or *moralité des honnêtes gens*. As Sainte-Beuve

points out, the Society of Jesus received a mortal wound in 1656. The *Lettres Provinciales* ruined its prestige. In the age of conformity and fashion which was at hand, a merely conventional view, a court view, of public and private morals came so near prevailing, that another equally great service was rendered by the Jansenists, by the uncompromising Saint-Cyran and Mother Angélique first of all, in proclaiming the incomparable and incommensurable morality of Jesus.

On the other hand, there is much in the life of Port-Royal that shocks modern sentiment. The worldly motives of the Arnauld parents in consigning their almost infant daughters to a nunnery, the nervous exaltation of these latter, the mistaken virtue of living in a swamp and accepting fever as divine chastisement, shaking with ague when they were not fired with zeal by the preaching of ignorant Capuchins—part of this early history of Port-Royal is by no means unworldly, and part is cruel and insane. What between "strokes of grace" and clever politics, Mother Angélique is a very complicated little girl. The family love of power was strong in her. On one occasion, after a sermon by a Bernardine scholar, the nuns were moved by one of these "strokes of grace" to yield to a long-cherished

desire of the little Mother and institute a reform. They threw all their poor little private possessions into the common stock, as indeed the vow of poverty required. Work-baskets, bits of finery, superfluous clothes, all were surrendered. "From that very day," runs the chronicle, "the Mother no longer had her quartan fever"; her imperious will had had its way. Directors and confessors, even the noble Saint-Cyran, laid heavy burdens of penance on these poor women, ordering them from place to place unreasonably, commanding weeks and even months of silence, rebuking natural impulses, making duty itself harder and privation more barren. We have here an excellent opportunity for comparing this ascetic ideal of virtue with the Greek ideal and the Renaissance ideal, and with the ideal of Jesus, which was so different from any of them. The pages of Sainte-Beuve furnish abundant material both favourable and unfavourable to the ascetic view.

The efficient reason for the suppression of Port-Royal was the timidity of despotism. Jesuit intrigue worked through this instinct. "The notion of the State," as Renan pungently remarks, "was carried to such a degree of exaggeration that a well patronised boarding-school had become a rival of royalty and a

menace to society." Louis XIV feared, and admitted that he disliked, everything that even faintly resembled rivalry of his power. The Archbishop of Paris, his tool in this ugly business, said brutally: "The King doesn't want rallying-points to spring up. A body without a head is always dangerous in a state. He wants to break up all that. He is tired of hearing people always quoting *ces messieurs, ces messieurs de Port-Royal.*" The King would have no fidelity which set men beyond his reach. The Jansenists, by their connection with a movement that extended beyond the boundaries of France, and especially by giving occasion for the union of Gallican bishops, would have incurred his displeasure, even if his confessors had not awakened his suspicion. It was their chief concern to reconcile his autocratic ambition, which tended toward centralisation, with an ultramontane policy essentially opposed to the spirit of his rule, but accepted by him for convenience or for conscience' sake.

A remark of Bussy-Rabutin, quoted by Sainte-Beuve, expresses the situation: "The Jansenists are very zealous; I find them even a little indiscreet; and even the greatest kings sometimes find people embarrassing who hope nothing from fortune and do not fear death."

The spirit of unity which made the age of Louis XIV great was the cause of many suppressions. Nothing can justify the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the crushing of Port-Royal, but it may well be that these were sacrifices necessary to the growth of the special kinds of excellence for which that age is famous. We can hardly imagine Sainte-Beuve, for example, wishing to disturb the equilibrium of the seventeenth century or greatly modify its ideals. Port-Royal gave to literature a Pascal and a Racine, the father of modern French prose and the supreme French poet; but on the whole, it appears as if conformity and not variation was needed for the production of a Bossuet, a Fénelon, a Boileau, a Madame de Sévigné, and the civilisation in which they flourished. So at least Sainte-Beuve seems to have thought. And although English literature of the seventeenth century is perhaps no less rich than French literature of the same period, and received some of its noblest additions when sects and parties were most numerous, nevertheless the unity of French literature in the reign of Louis XIV gives of itself a value to all its parts. You can make yourself at home in it, breathing its atmosphere, learning to know its personages, as you never can make yourself at home in the

more diversified and contradictory literature of England in the same period. Every one of its authors illustrates and reinforces the others. These are advantages of a centralised administration and a national life devoted to a definite set of ideals.

But there is another side. The sacrifice must have been enormous. The loss in personal character cannot be reckoned. The crushing of Port-Royal is only one of many examples of how independence and firmness fared in that reign.

"Ah! if ever," cries Sainte-Beuve, near the end of his work, "if ever there was an opportunity for this country of honour and folly to become a country of force and legality, where men would defend their rights foot by foot, even by quibbling and squabbling, but defend them to the death and triumphantly in death itself, it would have been (I have felt it often, in this history, and I feel it still more distinctly now)—it would have been on condition that the Jansenist element, unamiable as it was, the element of Saint-Cyran and Arnauld, should not be quite overcome, quite eliminated, so that it might have taken a recognised and permanent place in the moral temperament of French society. The disciples of Port-Royal, if Port-Royal had lived on, would have become a nucleus in the nation, and would perhaps have given it solidity and consistency; for they were persons, as M. Royer-Collard used to say to me, with whom one knew what to expect—a quality which has since then been conspicuously lacking in our mobile and brilliant generations."

The Jansenists were much blamed for their contentiousness. The nuns especially were

considered mad for their long resistance to the order bidding them sign their disapproval of certain tenets which the Pope declared were to be found in Jansenius's huge theological work, the *Augustinus*. Able scholars declared their inability to discover these points, and it is doubtful if many of those excellent ladies would have recognised them, even had they been capable of reading the book; but they were obstinate in any case. Sainte-Beuve found virtue in this trait. He was thinking, no doubt, of England's gain in taking up into her national character those puritanical qualities the like of which rendered Jansenism obnoxious in France.

An anecdote repeated by Sainte-Beuve may serve as a symbol of the folly the French nation committed. On the day in 1709 when the last faithful group of nuns was driven from Port-Royal des Champs and dispersed forever, the lieutenant of police, M. d'Argenson, took the precaution to surround the place with troops in case of an uprising among the country people, who were attached to the devout community.

"The story is told that a great lord, who was said to be the Count of Toulouse [a royal bastard], being out hunting that day in the woods near Port-Royal, met several companies of archers, who were guarding the

approaches, about half a league away. There were not less than three hundred men. Having asked what they were ordered to do there, he could not conceal his astonishment when he heard the answer. Son of the King though he was, he shrugged his shoulders in pity, and went away."

Port-Royal, important as it is when considered as a work of literary art, possesses even a deeper significance to any one interested in Sainte-Beuve's life. He wrote it for more than one purpose, and among these was the desire to marshal and inspect his own religious sentiments. It is well worth while, then, to observe the result, in so far as it is traceable in the book. The first striking element of his religious prepossessions, and one which reveals itself unmistakably, is their definiteness. We might have expected from Sainte-Beuve a loose definition of Christianity. On the contrary, he again and again reveals his instinctive or habitual conception of Christianity, and it is always a stringent, systematic, and unequivocal view. It is neither a Catholic nor a Protestant view exclusively; it has perhaps none of the distinctive features of Catholic or of Protestant theology as contrasted with one another, but it includes the common ground of orthodoxy. Referring to the Jansenists, he thus defines not only their faith but historic orthodoxy:

"Their Christianity is reduced to the bare essentials—I mean Holy Scripture, the doctrine of sin and free pardon, the appeal in all affairs of this world to the unique tribunal of Jesus Christ, the well-beloved of their soul, as they call him, Jesus, our eternal priest! Now, whoever believes essentially in these points, even though he admit no others, is a Christian. Whoever does not know these points and hold them, even though he were covered with Catholic signs and even though he had the great word 'Gospel' ever on his tongue, is more or less an idolater or a Pelagian, a demi-faithful, superficial and superstitious."

Whatever one may think of the relation of this creed to the religion of Jesus, whatever one may think of the wisdom of forcing the infinitely diverse minds of men into a corner in this way, it can hardly be denied that this is a definite orthodox statement. Sainte-Beuve says, "It is the whole Christian doctrine we are stirring up, in a particular case and a restricted area."

Apart from dogma, however, and in the general field of sentiment and conduct, the type of religion which he regards as Christianity is not so world-wide as he apparently thought. Certain limitations in his boyhood training, a certain concentration of his thought in early manhood, and finally the preliminary studies for writing *Port-Royal*, all tended to narrow his view. There is a conception of Christianity which was more prevalent in the Middle Ages

than it is now, and which is to-day more frequently encountered in France than in English-speaking countries. According to this conception, the fundamental thing in Christianity is its incompatibility with life; Christianity is other-worldliness. Scarcely anywhere is this view more insisted upon than in *Volupté*. It underlies *Port-Royal*. There is hardly any suggestion in the whole work that the author differs from the Jansenists in respect to their claim of exclusiveness for the Christian religion.

No touch of irony betrays a want of sympathy on his part when dealing with this phase of his subject. "Even when converted," he remarks in all seriousness, "Pascal is still interested in geometry." The purpose of a Christian life, in the eyes of his beloved ascetics and their mediæval and primitive models, was to prepare the soul for death; and it is characteristic of Sainte-Beuve that he appears to adopt this view of the matter, not merely for an artistic reason or in the exercise of historical impartiality, but personally and for himself. Such is his general attitude. Once at least, however, he rises to a wider sweep, in his beautiful definition of holiness. "Holiness," he says, "is an habitual state of the whole being, stretching towards the infinite order and in harmony with the order of the world." In the

last clause we see the element that Port-Royal was prone to overlook. That the order of the world could be in harmony with the infinite order was what the ascetics and puritans of that age virtually denied. It is only in a footnote, and, as it were, under pressure, that Sainte-Beuve admits the danger of the more austere view:

"In this sense," he says, "the Jansenists were too much disposed to prove how far Christianity is from being human and natural; and in so far they co-operated with the free-thinkers, who, in their manner, are bent on proving the same thing. Here we have one of the reefs on which Jansenism was wrecked, one of the causes which made it odious to the philosophers and at the same time compromised it in the eyes of Rome. I make no concealment of this. By taking this rigorous Jansenist point of view and considering history from it, men were able to say: 'Christianity at all times has triumphed and reigned much less than has been supposed. The real Christians know this and confess it among themselves to frighten themselves; the incredulous do likewise, in order to authorise their own unbelief.' The fact is that by claiming to diminish the number of Christians worthy of the name, one ends by invalidating the idea of a Church. There is a moment when, if one agrees with Saint-Cyran, one is led to conclude that there are pretty nearly no Catholics in the Church, because everybody is a Pelagian or a pagan or a heretic."

He is here following, with apparent, but perhaps only apparent, reluctance, the argument of Bayle. Acknowledging again, in another place, the tendency of French theology to go

to extremes, thereby making itself exclusive and unattractive, he calls attention to the fact that in France times of faith brought forth *just* men, in Italy *holy* men. This is due in part, he says, to the nature of the French mind, and in part to the fact that the French Church had to struggle with Protestantism. "Gallican Catholicism has always been busy ridding itself of something and protecting itself; thus it has rejected in succession Protestantism, Jansenism, and Jesuitism."

He gives us these glimpses over a wide field, and then returns persistently to what we must call his permanent feeling. Religion, as he *feels* it, however he may argue about it, is sombre, a life of fears and renunciations. He speaks of "a late autumn sky, a Christian sky, half clouded". In this figure and in scores of other expressions, not only in *Port-Royal* and *Volupté* but everywhere in his writings, he shows a lack of knowledge and sympathy which impairs his authority as a critic of religion. There is a supernatural Christianity, of which he was able, in some sort, to judge. There is also a natural Christianity, not at variance with reason, limited in its pretensions, but inflexible in its claims on the human conscience, and imparting on all sides joy and hope. It was no doubt easier in 1840 than it is now

to overlook the advantages and even the existence of what might be called the religion of Jesus. Sainte-Beuve proved himself a keen observer and a fair judge within the old limits, but the field has been immensely enlarged since he planned his *Port-Royal*.

His old acquaintances thought him much too clever to have written *Port-Royal* in entire good faith. It must be admitted that the work is not such as might have been expected from his previous career. A careful scrutiny, however, fails to discover more than a very few touches which seem to be either insincere or timorous. He frankly avows in one of his prefaces that he took into consideration his new public, "which had its peculiar susceptibilities". His precautions are shown, however, more in the elaborateness of his style than in any surrender of opinion, and terminate with the second volume, after which he steps out of the lecture-room and addresses the world. Those over-subtle efforts to conciliate Lausanne by adapting himself to a Protestant environment, distasteful and fairly ludicrous as they appear, were not, after all, kept up. We tire a little of his phrases and deprecatory gestures, and sigh for a touch of his own irony or that bluntness of which he is capable; but the difficulty does not last long. There is nothing

unmanly in the avowal which occurs in his preface to the volume of 1840:

> "This home of Viret, this neighbourhood of Calvin, seemed to me a good place to try, if possible, the alliance once so often imputed to Port-Royal and so much blamed, but to try it especially on the side of Christian brotherhood and intelligent good-will. Thus my thoughts worked, seeking all points of that new horizon and creating for themselves connections and points of contrast or of agreement."

He took less pains to protect himself against the Jesuits. With malicious complacency he pockets the warrant of his fighting qualities and the brevet of his theological competence provided by a treatise written by a member of that society as a comment on his first volume, printing it in an appendix in the second edition. In another appendix that appeared at the same time, he refers with immense satisfaction to Vinet's "recognition of the Christian character and spirit in which the work was conceived, and the knowledge of true Christianity" which he had brought to his task.

But the most interesting feature of this appendix is the tremendous onslaught on Balzac. This is one of several occasions on which the critic spoke his mind about the novelist. Of all pachydermatous animals, Balzac in the hands of Sainte-Beuve furnishes the best sport, and it would be well if over-

zealous admirers of his talent were to read the article. It was provoked by a review of *Port-Royal* written in Balzac's grossest manner. It must be confessed that Sainte-Beuve descends to his enemy's level, and the celebrated amenities of French criticism are thrown to the winds. He even makes parade of the Christian qualities which entitle him to write on a religious subject, and boasts himself more fit than the other men of letters, his contemporaries.

"Even though a man possessed some of the qualities of a critic, that would not suffice as an equipment for speaking pertinently of Port-Royal. This subject, in itself restricted and circumscribed, is a reef, or rather a defile, through which one cannot pass easily. The primary quality and condition for judging of Port-Royal is, in fact, if not to practise Christianity, at least to comprehend its essential spirit. And what minds could be less intimately Christian, and consequently less Port-Royalist, than our great modern men of letters?"

Chateaubriand, he grants, had encouraged him, but Lamartine had opposed his plan, thinking the subject too small! Béranger, in a manly and friendly style, had said: "I should like to see you finish your *Port-Royal*, for I love the subject, without being acquainted with it. Still, I cannot conceal my fear that you may drift into what I call religiosity, the mania of our time, which I consider the exact opposite of the religious spirit." Sainte-Beuve cries

out that this is precisely what he has avoided. Going on with the list, he finds fault with Hugo's praise, which was showy, but not intelligent.

"As for M. de Balzac," he concludes, "he had no right to approach the subject, even remotely. He could have no opinion on these matters. He was in every way incompetent, for never was any man farther from the spirit, the morals, and the temperament required. It is absurd, even to think of. . . . I have met him and seen him, the least Port-Royal of men, a nature exuberant and full of sap, greedy of present success and of pleasures, exhaling self-intoxication from every pore, breathing covetousness and desire, extravagant of exaggerated praise and craving it for himself, excessive, point-blank, cash down—but I pause and refuse to overstep the bounds I have drawn for myself."

Valuable contribution to a portrait of Balzac, and thoroughly deserved! But it is reassuring to know that this is almost the only, and certainly the worst, instance of Sainte-Beuve's temper getting beyond his control in print.

The few passages that point to an underlying spirit of negation are almost all in the third volume, published a long time after the appearance of the second. They are not very striking, and it is quite untrue that the course of the work shows a marked falling-off in the author's interest. "I love my subject," he remarks; "I revere it; but I have dwelt in it for years, and have had time to look at it

from all sides. I know its weaknesses and limitations, and since nothing obliges me to dissemble them, I point them out." And he proceeds to tell us that only three of the Jansenists were minds of the first order, Saint-Cyran, Jansenius, and Pascal, however general was the moral eminence of the others. He does not deny that the duel between Pascal and the Jesuits led Jansenism into an oblique and narrow path, so that what in the eyes of the world is its chief title to glory, as the executioner of public morality, was really its downfall. Mentioning a letter in which Voltaire discusses Pascal, our author departs so far from the spirit in which he has determined to carry out his task as to say:

> "To-day Voltaire passes generally for the most rapid and lively organ of human good sense, if there be such a thing as human good sense, which he himself doubted very much. As for Pascal, he is on all sides forced into his entrenchments, and is being day by day cut to pieces in his Gibraltar. His personal figure grows grander in this attitude of despair, but we cannot help asking where is the triumph of his cause."

Negation, if you will, is to be found in Sainte-Beuve's treatment of the miracle of the holy thorn; but not even the cause of æsthetic harmony, let alone moral truth, could have been served by aught but frankness on such a subject.

"The principal and very shady procedure of our friends the Jansenists, on this occasion, consisted in laying hold on the supernatural fact which concerned them and which they did not even question, and in seeing in it a sort of specimen miracle which should prove all those of the past and thus serve to refute atheists and unbelievers. . . . Thus they insisted on a full and entire similarity between this miracle and those which constitute the most redoubtable mysteries of the faith."

Sainte-Beuve lets the reader draw for himself what conclusions he may as to the fatal facility of vision which the expectation of miracle creates.

In the course of his work, he was disconcerted by a sudden awakening of interest in Port-Royal, caused by the fact that the French Academy offered a prize for a eulogy on Pascal, and also by Cousin's irruption into his chosen field. He had thought himself in a cloister, and found it was a market-place. He was annoyed by the thought of competition. The subject would only be spoiled by becoming fashionable. It had already lost some of its freshness and glamour when he published the third volume, but he was determined to complete his task worthily, in truth, sincerity, and independence. And perhaps even to the end he retained a faint hope of spiritual benefit for himself. In one very remarkable page, which is at once the centre and summit of his

book and the product of all the sifting, straining, melting, and hammering to which he had subjected his mind and heart, he declares:

"Far be it from me to assert that there is only one way of being a Christian! But one of the most direct ways to become one is, I am sure, to confront fallen human nature exactly as those great positive observers, Hobbes, La Rochefoucauld, Machiavelli, would do it. The sadder this vision is to any man whose soul is not very brave, or even to any strong-hearted man who is very capable of love and very hungry for happiness, the more it impels recourse to the great remedy, the desperate remedy. The questioner asks himself if this be the true state, final, complete, eternal; he seeks the issue, as did Pascal, out of this miserable crowd and this earth, even in the desert spaces of heaven, in that blank immensity of space and that infinite terrifying silence. Now, this narrow, difficult, and almost inaccessible issue, this ladder of salvation which we scarcely dare hope to find, is Christianity: I mean real Christianity."

This passage is curiously in accord and yet curiously at variance with the rest of the work. It is perfectly Port-Royalist. It expresses very concisely Sainte-Beuve's ideal of Christianity. But nothing could be less in harmony with the historical spirit which enabled him to write the book. This pessimism, this despair, this mechanical plan of salvation, shock the modern sense which in spite of him was pulsing in the critic's veins. Yet, pessimism for pessimism, it is less paralysing than the state of complete spiritual evaporation to which

the following mournful words, written in August, 1857, on the completion of *Port-Royal*, bear witness:

"I have finished this history, begun so long ago. . . . What did I wish to do? What have I done? What have I gained? Young, unquiet, sick, in love, and curious to discover the most completely hidden flowers, my chief desire at first was, by penetrating the mystery of these pious souls, these covered lives, to gather the deep, intimate poetry which they exhaled. But I had scarcely advanced a step when the poetry vanished or gave way before severer aspects; religion alone remained in all its rigour, and Christianity in all its bareness. I have not been able to enter into this religion otherwise than as an explorer, an expositor."

Then after referring to his need of moral guidance and the profit he might have gained from commerce with those holy lives, and his failure to apply to himself the lessons he extracted from them—a passage of singular and almost revolting frankness—he continues, apostrophising the Port-Royalists:

"I have not imitated you, I have never dreamed of acting like you. . . . Strive as I may, I have been and am only an investigator, a sincere, attentive, scrupulous observer. . . . I have been in my own way a servant of truth, to the utmost of my ability. But how little that is! How limited is our vision! It resembles a pale torch flaring for a moment in the darkness of an immense night. And he who had it most at heart to know his object, whose ambition was most engaged in seizing it, whose pride was most alert to paint it—how powerless he feels, and how far beneath his task, on the

day when, seeing it almost finished and the result obtained, he feels his exaltation sink, feels himself overcome by faintness and inevitable disgust, and perceives in his turn that he too is only a fleeting illusion in the midst of the infinite illusory flux!"

There is a portrait of Du Guet, one of the Jansenists, for whom Sainte-Beuve felt a peculiar liking, which may serve to end this chapter, because it really delineates his ideal of himself as author of *Port-Royal:* "Firm and yet insinuating, a character full of unction, full of grace sometimes, and on occasion full of spiritual gladness; but at the same time verity itself, integral, strict, in its most exact expression, like the sword of the word divine." Comparing this picture with the one above, it is a pleasure to be able to say that the latter appears the better likeness.

CHAPTER VI

CRITICAL CAMPAIGNS

SAINTE-BEUVE finished his course at Lausanne on the 25th of May, 1838. On the 26th he wrote to Victor Pavie, at Angers, in a tone of deep discouragement. Pavie too, the ardent Catholic, had hoped that his friend might receive a moral benefit from the study of Port-Royal. But it was not so. There remained only an immense lassitude. Yet if Sainte-Beuve had given Lausanne much of himself—too much, indeed, of his vitality and too many expectations—the clean and honest little city, the independent and contented land of Vaud, had supplied him with a new point of view. A delightful power of poetry is its capability of discovering and rendering permanent the charm of places. A poet, one would think, can have but one real home. He may leave it in his youth, never to return, and may find the sources of his intellectual life elsewhere, but the ground-colour of his imagination will be some shade of the soil that his feet trod in boyhood; the pictures by means of which he thinks, the types through which he represents

to himself the classes of society, will be the scenes and the persons he knew before ambition or disillusion began to rob him of his primal heritage. To be himself, to touch his native earth and be refreshed, he has but to listen till he do beget "that golden time again".

The admirable unity of French literature, its intensely social spirit, its grand generality, have been secured at a dear rate. Concentrated in Paris, where they have formed almost a profession, French men of letters have lived more completely in their calling than English men of letters have done—have accomplished more fully, perhaps, the works they have undertaken, and have more frequently enjoyed the rewards of fame; but the poetical geography of France has lost what Paris has gained. And poetry itself has suffered. Not only have the great poets been too early severed from nature, but the minor poets have been obscured and discouraged by the immensity of a few supreme reputations. The underwoods have been stunted by the great oaks.

His acquaintance with Juste Olivier, a local and no doubt a minor poet, living very fruitfully on the eastern slope of the Jura Mountains, the slope that looks away from Paris, would in itself have been ample compensation to the metropolitan critic for his

eight months' absence from the capital. Olivier's poems are not only Swiss in subject and colouring; they are local in their immediate inspiration. They preserve the sunshine of the vineyards, the snows of winter in the village street, the blue of Lake Leman, the balsam of the pines above. They are without pretence, the fresh, natural essence of a tranquil life. They do not lift one above the encircling mountains to contemplate the destinies of races; yet one may find in them as true pictures of mankind as in Hugo's *Legend of the Ages*. Philosophy apart, and with modest cheerfulness replacing melancholy, a few of them resemble in their power of local association the poems in which Leopardi immortalised his mountain home in Italy. Sainte-Beuve, always awake to the value of intimate or domestic poetry, but inclining rather to the sad than to the happy strain, found here a harmonious literary consecration of what he had observed and felt in Switzerland. He had gone harvesting with the peasants of Eysins, Olivier's native village, and could appreciate the sincerity of the young poet's lines, *Dans le Sillon avec mon Père*.

Returning at once to Paris, to plough his own furrow, Sainte-Beuve kept about him for some time the atmosphere of Lausanne.

At first he wrote little for the periodicals, a few articles in the *Revue des Deux Mondes;* for he had enough to do transforming his lectures into a book and editing the works of Fontanes. His latest poetical venture, the *August Thoughts* (*Pensées d'Août*), published on the eve of his departure for Lausanne, had not made new friends nor an enthusiastic welcome for him on his return. He had been able to write about it from Lausanne to Victor Pavie as if superior to unpopularity: "I am not in the least affected nor disturbed by all the fuss off yonder; a few words from friends like you would touch me more than torrents of ink from my enemies. I do not consider this volume so far removed from its older brothers nor so much beneath them." But it was harder to face defeat in Paris. The reluctance of the public to accord him the honours of a poet was due in part to the fact that his wretched affair with the Hugos was becoming known to a small but influential circle. His reputation was damaged. There were persons who could read fairly well between the lines of *Volupté*, *Joseph Delorme*, the *Consolations*, the *August Thoughts*, and a little story entitled *Madame de Pontivy*, printed in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for March 15, 1837, for the purpose of reaching Madame Hugo. Curious searchers

have since discovered an unfinished story, in the vein of *Volupté*, but less serious, which he wrote in collaboration with Guttinguer.

The disappointment of his poetical hopes, so persistently entertained, so reluctantly abandoned, together with the reaction from his terrible struggle with Port-Royal, left Sainte-Beuve very weary in the spring of 1839, and he turned again towards Lausanne for refreshment. He went by way of Italy, however, and of his brief Italian journey, in May and June, 1839, little is known, neither its exact length nor what places he visited. He excited the pity of Victor Pavie by preferring pagan to pontifical Rome. Apart from this, scarcely any trace even of his impressions has been discovered. In July he wrote to Collombet from Lausanne, where he was exercising his poetical vein and resting: "I was beginning to suffer from poetry striking in. . . . I shall soon be back in Paris, with my friends there, and also the petty wretchedness and the collar armed with spikes." And on September 25 he writes to Collombet from Paris, where he is once more wearing the chain.

It was a necessary bondage. Replying to a young man, named Michiels, who complained of an unfavourable book-review and said that Sainte-Beuve and his generation had been

luckier, the critic, who, we must remember, was already eminent, declared:

"No, we were not pushed into favour by our contemporaries; many of them and many of our friends too were against us. And have I even now surmounted these difficulties? After fifteen years I find myself no better off, pecuniarily, than at the start, and have no advantage over you except that I can get my articles into the *Revue*. If I did not print them there, I could not place them anywhere else I pleased, and I should not have a sou, literally."

In 1839 he had eleven articles printed in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, in 1840 fourteen, in 1841 seven, in 1842 six, in 1843 twelve, in 1844 ten, in 1845 nine, in 1846 five, in 1847 one, in 1848 one, in 1849 two. In these years he appeared seven times in the *Revue de Paris*, and sixteen or seventeen times in the *Journal des Débats*. His connection with the latter, because it was a political newspaper, was precarious. Even with the *Revue des Deux Mondes* his connection was at one time broken, and it amounted to very little in 1846, 1847, 1848, and 1849. Interminable novels, especially those of Eugène Sue, were replacing serious articles in the newspapers, in spite—perhaps in consequence—of the growing size of the page. At the best, Sainte-Beuve could barely earn a living by journalism. And one or all of the three periodicals on which he

depended might fail him any day, for he had stubborn principles of literary honour and a quick temper. He occupied a cheap set of student's rooms, four flights up, in the obscure Cour du Commerce, where, as Théodore Pavie relates, "he lighted his fire every morning with wood which his mother's maid-servant brought him in a basket, and seldom went out"; and his mother, when complimented on her son's works, exclaimed: "Ah, don't mention that! My son is as good as lost to me. I would rather have given birth to a mason!" The situation was much relieved by his nomination, in August, 1840, to a post at the Mazarine Library, with comfortable lodgings in the Palace of the Institute. A few weeks afterwards he asked for the hand of a daughter of General Pelletier in marriage, and was refused.

Throughout the decade 1838–1848 he was on terms of intimate friendship with Madame Desbordes-Valmore, a poet and actress, whose delicate feminine taste, fine sensibility, courageous endurance of ill fortune, and remoteness from the main currents of society attracted him, and to whom he served as a literary counsellor. Her poetry is as melancholy as his, and more restricted in its range; but, as he perhaps felt, her inspiration was more direct and her style more limpid.

After returning from Italy he was gradually absorbed by the aristocratic circles into which he had set foot before 1838. By 1847 he was so intimate with the family of Count Molé that he rented a little house in the village near the Château du Marais, in order to do his work in the morning and yet be able to dine at the great house. D'Haussonville, who knew that society himself, draws, with half-concealed disdain, a picture of Sainte-Beuve serving the ladies of that elevated world as a purveyor of literary curiosities, lending them letters in which George Sand, in her stormiest times, had poured into his heart the story of her passions. "In a word," says this biographer, who, it must be remembered, had it on his conscience to avenge his caste, "Sainte-Beuve, during those years that followed his return from Lausanne and Rome, lived, with regularity and propriety, the life of that upper class to which he had hitherto been almost a stranger. Our generation never knew this Sainte-Beuve, of the salon and the château, a very different man from him who was to restrict himself finally to the unfrequented hermitage of the Rue Montparnasse. It was the last phase of his humiliation before his cruel revenge." The contrast is piquant between this worldly intercourse with the old nobility at their

country-seats and his visits to Madame Valmore's daughter Ondine in the common parlour of the girls' boarding-school where she gave lessons. One or two blind passages in his letters have been so misused as to create the impression that he was engaged to be married to this young woman, who, like her mother, wrote poetry.

In the upper sphere where he was a tolerated intruder, he made the acquaintance of Madame d'Arbouville, whose maiden name was Sophie de Bazancourt. She was descended from the Countess d'Houdetot, the friend and patroness of Rousseau. She was born in 1810. Her husband, whom she married in 1832, served for a long time as an officer in Africa, whither her delicate health did not permit her to follow him. She too was a writer. Her poetry, while by no means so artistic and so rich in meaning as Madame Desbordes-Valmore's, possesses a simple, old-fashioned charm. Those who care only for the latest fashions in literature will scorn the little book in which she coined her heart, but others will find the *Manuscript of My Great-Aunt* (*Manuscrit de ma Grand'tante*) a touching story, and appreciate the sincerity of the poems which it frames. In the preface to her *Poems and Tales* (*Poésies et Nouvelles*), which appeared in 1855, it is

said that "her imagination was inclined towards the dark side of life; she saw the weaknesses of the human soul, the nothingness of illusion, the unreality of sentiments; in the affections she sought disappointments, and, giving to the passions the primitive sense of the word, she painted them as suffering". This was of her time, of course, but it was also a result of her experience, for she was a great sufferer, yielding at last to a lingering and painful disease in 1850. Sainte-Beuve's attachment to her, at first literary, then personal, did not remain strictly within the limits of friendship. The relation became, on his part, a passion, which was not, however, encouraged.

Sainte-Beuve was exposed to peculiar danger when mingling with what is called the world. He judged it by standards with which he had become acquainted through memoirs of a more corrupt age. He was never at home in it. So long as he courted the favours of "society", in this limited sense, he risked his dignity as a man of letters and was liable to make absurd mistakes. His excursion into that perilous region was fruitful in details about the lives of three whole generations of writers, and enriched his *Literary Portraits* and *Contemporary Portraits* with a thousand anecdotes, but he compromised his future in

more than one way. He was not safe, he was not free, he was not himself, till he had withdrawn into his cave.

He went so far as to boast of his achievements in "society", for although the following passage appears to have been written in 1859, it refers, and with too much complacency, to the period we have now under review. It is in reply to a M. Génin, who had attacked him:

"If M. Génin had lived in the world, in society, during the fifteen years that I spent there before 1848, he would comprehend that a man of letters without fortune, without ambition, modest in his manners and knowing his place, may by his intelligence, perhaps, by his character, by his tact and all his conduct, obtain an honourable and agreeable position and live with personages of any rank, even with very distinguished people, who are not precisely his equals, on that footing of unconscious equality which is, or was, the charm and the honour of French social life. As for me, during those years, which I may call happy, I had tried, with some success, to make my life pleasant and dignified. To write from time to time agreeable things, to read things agreeable and serious, but taking care not to write too much, to cultivate one's friends, to reserve a portion of one's wit for daily intercourse and be able to use it freely without niggardliness, to give more to one's intimates than to the public, to reserve the finest, tenderest part, the flower of one's being, for the private circle, to enjoy with moderation, in a sweet commerce of intelligence and sentiment, the autumn of one's youth: it was thus I figured in my dream the literary *gentleman*, who knows the value of the things that count, and does not allow his trade and his work to

crowd out the essential from his soul and his thoughts. Dire necessity has seized upon me since then, and forced me to renounce what I regarded as the only happiness or the consolation of a wise and melancholy man."

Too much elegy again! And too little self-respect! It must be remembered that for the sake of this position in "society" he betrayed Lamennais, and that while he enjoyed these delights he was preparing what his hosts and patrons of the legitimist and clerical party very naturally regarded as a desecration of their idols, beginning with Benjamin Constant and ending, or rather recommencing afresh, with Chateaubriand. It would not be fair to say that he lived in that circle as a spy; only he did not scruple afterwards to use against its lost causes the knowledge of anecdotes, family history, unpublished letters, and other manuscripts which came to him through that intimacy. He felt the loss of independence, and wrote later: "The more a man of letters arrives at all the honours of society, the less does he dare employ all his intelligence, all his thought, either in his writings or in his conversation." Morally he would be a more admirable figure of a man if he had considered his independence even more strictly limited by these voluntary engagements. Though we should have lost, he would have been the

gainer. At any rate, we owe to this part of his career the following sage reflection:

> "Far from stimulating as it should those whom it rewards, the fashionable world intimidates them and robs them of their vein. They fear henceforth to compromise a fortune which depends, they feel, on caprice and chance. And thus, unless they take good care, they come to prudent silence. The infatuations, the stupidities, the acts of injustice which are soon witnessed by a man of talent who succeeds, and which are inevitable in every crowd, even in select crowds, inoculate him with the virus of irony and discouragement."

The arena of his rather dubious social successes was in particular the salon of Madame Récamier. Here, at the house called the Abbaye aux Bois, Chateaubriand, old in years and triumphs but still young in desire, was enjoying to the last that indispensable feminine petting which, from one hand or another, had smoothed all his days. Here the great man breathed the incense of his admirers, to whom he read and showed pages of those wonderful but often fallacious reminiscences which were reserved for publication after his death, as the *Memoirs from beyond the Tomb* (*Mémoires d'outre Tombe*). Here a little fictitious *ancien régime* was preserved even during the reign of the Citizen King, or rather a little dream-world, where all the pages of the legitimist mock-epic were recited harmlessly together.

Memories of ante-Revolutionary days, of the Emigration, of the two Restorations, the profound indifference to religion which characterised the old nobility and Chateaubriand himself, the ultramontane principles which were paraded as a matter of chivalry, caste, and interest, an old-fashioned refinement of speech and manners, an instinctive repulsion against modern life, against liberal government and free thought, a conscious determination to uphold the distinctions of rank, to maintain a citadel of spirituality, and above all to stand by one another—these were the elements of this phantom realm, governed by a charming woman and consecrated to the worship of a venerable author.

In September, 1843, occurred the tragical death, by drowning, of Victor Hugo's daughter Léopoldine and her husband. Friends urged Sainte-Beuve to attempt to re-enter the poet's heart through this wide wound, but he declined. His friends did not know that he was then in the very act of sealing the fatal bottle of revenge, and he probably felt that it was too late to draw back. In November, that infamy, the printing of the *Book of Love*, was accomplished. It was entered in the *Bibliographie de la France* under date of November the eleventh.

But ambition did what neither sympathy

nor remorse could effect, and within four months Sainte-Beuve, by humbly visiting Victor Hugo, secured an election to the French Academy. He was a candidate for the chair left vacant by the death of the poet Casimir Delavigne. Following the custom, he called on the members of the Academy. He failed in his first attempts. Victor Hugo is said to have voted against him eleven times. Finally, after the abject humiliation of a visit, the poet was appeased, and on March 14, 1844, Sainte-Beuve was elected. Was it hypocrisy or frankness that caused him to send the following paragraph to Juste Olivier for insertion, anonymously, in the *Revue Suisse*, while the election was still pending? Did he mean himself, to whom the words so exactly apply?

"The majority of the authors most read, most known to the public, those whom their readers, whom they have so often charmed or amused, would name off-hand and naturally for literary honours, unfortunately lack in their lives that respect and that solidity which assure a man his place everywhere. Corruption is at the heart of literature, and too often it not only lodges in the heart, but spreads upon the brow, advertises itself and keeps open shop. Hence this vexatious disaccord between the talent which we are ready to admire and the person whom we cannot esteem as we might wish."

Another triumph bought too dear! He had managed his campaign with skill, even warning

his friend Collombet at Lyons never to repeat certain anecdotes about the Academicians: "To divert one's self at the expense of the augurs would be to shut the sanctuary against one's self forever. I already have enough difficulties as it is. If ever there is a vacancy, whether I present myself again or not, please never write for any journal a word in my favour. These outside measures do more harm than anything else." We have seen what he understood by inside measures.

By a singular fatality, it was the official duty of Victor Hugo to make the address of welcome on February 27, 1845, when his enemy was received into the Academy. As the dignity of the place demanded, they spoke with careful courtesy, although the subjects of their remarks might under other circumstances have aroused antagonism. Sainte-Beuve, praising Delavigne, raised a delicate question. He had sometimes wondered, he said, what would have been the result if some eminent dramatic poet of the school he must beg not to be forced to define, but which he would frankly call the classical school, had resisted the popular drift at the moment when men were most impatient of classicism. If this poet had also profited by the occasion to go back to his sources, to increase the distinct-

ness of his colouring, the simplicity of his means, the unity of his action, and to render in all their noble austerity the true passions of mankind, what might not the result have been? He would, continued the bold orator, have earned and eventually won the favour of a grateful public.

The rules obliging him to show the eulogy of his predecessor to the Academician who was to pronounce the discourse of welcome, Sainte-Beuve had submitted this passage to Hugo, and naturally Hugo had objected to it. But the critic insisted, and the passage, which was in effect a reproof to the author of *Le Roi s'amuse* and *Marion Delorme*, was allowed to remain. Hugo in his turn might have retorted that the author of *Joseph Delorme* should be less severe with his old associates in Romanticism, but he behaved more generously. He epitomised in carefully chosen words the distinguishing qualities of Sainte-Beuve's poetry: "Your verse, often profound, almost always expressive of suffering, seeks those who suffer, whoever they may be, honoured or fallen, good or bad. . . . Hence you have given us a body of poetry at once penetrating and timid, which discreetly touches the mysterious fibres of the heart." He praised him as novelist and as biographer. He uttered a generous

prophecy, which was never to be fully realised, although many students of Sainte-Beuve still fancy that it was fulfilled:

"As a philosopher, you have confronted all systems; as critic, you have studied all literatures. Some day you will complete and crown these later works, which we cannot judge to-day because they are yet unfinished even in your mind; you will prove, in one comprehensive survey, as your definitive conclusion, that even if there be always, at the bottom of all philosophical systems, something human and therefore vague and undecided, there is nevertheless always something divine in every form of art, something certain, therefore, and absolute; so that while the study of all the philosophies leads to doubt, the study of all the poesies leads to enthusiasm."

Then followed a brilliant rhetorical passage on the Jansenists, a passage lacking, perhaps, the appropriate nicety of terms, but showing no want of good-will: he said they seemed to have foreseen the coming of the sombre and tumultuous army of the Encyclopædia and to have attempted to build a wall against it; they tried to reform Rome while obeying Rome, to do from within and in a spirit of love what Luther had endeavoured to do from without and in a spirit of wrath; they wished to create in France, between the suffering and ignorant people and the voluptuous and corrupt nobility, an intermediate class, sound, stoical, and strong. Then, yielding

complacently to his lyrical vein, and losing touch with good sense and even with good taste, he indulged in a ranting exhortation to hold fast to faith *per se:* "Believe in humanity, in genius, in the future, in yourselves." The discourse ended in a characteristic glorification of patriotism and of Delavigne as a patriotic poet.

The publication of Sainte-Beuve's letters, and particularly of his correspondence with Juste Olivier, has enabled us to look behind the official curtain that draped this proud solemnity. Olivier was at that time editing the *Revue Suisse* at Lausanne. Sainte-Beuve had taken advantage of this fact to carry out one of his favourite plans. He had conceived, he says, of a perfect literary journal, which should have a double head, one at Paris to know everything, the other at Lausanne or Neuchâtel to reveal everything. He realised that a man in Paris who had access to persons and facts could not, without inconvenience and impropriety, print all he found out; whereas if published a fortnight later in French-speaking Switzerland, the news might have every desired effect. It would be different about politics; but "about literature Paris is upset only by what is printed in Paris". Between February, 1843, and July, 1845, therefore, he

sent monthly budgets of news to Olivier, to be worked over into articles for the *Revue Suisse*. These letters have been published, partly in the volume entitled *Parisian Chronicles*, partly in the *Correspondence with M. and Madame Olivier*, and are a great help towards knowing Sainte-Beuve's real opinions of his contemporaries.

The plan, while not necessarily cowardly or otherwise dishonourable, was, to say the least, full of dangerous opportunities for a man like Sainte-Beuve, whose timidity, whose caution, whose curiosity, whose animosities were constant, and whose courage came only in flashes. But while it is true that he would not have dared to print over his signature many of the judgments which he sent to Olivier, or, more likely, would have written the same thoughts in a more insinuating style, with elaborate apologetic phrasing, for he always managed somehow to say what he meant, it is not true that this correspondence is a mere sack of poison. The mask is thrown aside, but the face is not full of malignity. If he "syllogises invidious truths", posterity has thus far approved most of them. But their nakedness is frightful even now, and would have been intolerable to the men and women with whom he was living. Some of his shrewdest observations, some of

his most trenchant judgments, are expressed in these notes. And, what is of most importance for our purpose of arriving at his real convictions on the questions that agitated his time, we have here his secret polemic. It is possible, with these notes in hand, to discover what his opinions were at that time, when the controversy between the Church and the "University", or national system of higher education, was arousing public interest, and the Revolutionary spirit was preparing for 1848. His judgments of persons are not capricious nor defamatory; they are based on conviction, and conform with the final decrees which he rendered more openly ten or twenty years later. But he would in most cases have been unwilling to express them at that time in his own name. He wrote, very truly, that there were a dozen men in France whom people no longer judged, but only praised or attacked. Their places were regarded as settled. He would speak of them without false respect and without bitterness.

The most delicate matters that he had to treat in the *Revue Suisse* were his own candidacy for a chair in the Academy and the ceremony of his reception. He managed in his report to express his sentiments without betraying his honour, and the achievement

deserves recognition. Madame de Girardin, attacking him in a Paris paper, charged him with deserting the cause of Romanticism.

"How does it come," this writer asked, "that M. Sainte-Beuve, whose incontestable talent we appreciate, but whom all the world once knew as an out and out republican and Romanticist, is now the favourite of all the ultra-monarchical and ultra-classical salons and of all the women of wit who reign there? The answer you make is, 'He has abjured.' A pretty reason! As if women ever flew to the help of those who abjure! . . . All is lost, all is done for, in a country where renegades are protected by women."

He quotes this letter, and gives a faithful, one might almost say an impartial, account of the two discourses. Of his own, he says that if his praise of Delavigne was exterior, his criticism of him was "intestinal"—an expression worth remembering in regard to much of his work henceforth, and reminding us of his original interest in physiology. He remarks that "M. Sainte-Beuve" kept his rôle as a critic while veiling it. Of Hugo's discourse he says very truly that it was too pompous. It sounds pompous still, as one reads it in the ponderous tome which contains the records of the Institute of France for 1845.

At the time of his admission to the Academy, the reputation of Sainte-Beuve the critic had about caught up with that of Sainte-Beuve the

poet and novelist. He had already begun the publication, in book form, of his essays and reviews. The first volume of *Literary Criticisms and Portraits* (*Critiques et Portraits littéraires*), which appeared in 1832, came to a second edition in 1836, when volumes two and three were printed. Volumes four and five were published in 1839. This collection contained the greater part of the critical work which he composed in his Romantic period. He wrote to a friend in 1839 that he desired the *Criticisms and Portraits* to be considered as an outgrowth of his elegiac and sentimental career rather than as real criticism; so much so that their sense would be destroyed if they should ever be printed in chronological order, that is, with reference to the dates of their subjects; the true order was that in which he had written them, according to his emotion and his caprice. A collection of *Literary Portraits* (*Portraits littéraires*) was published in 1844, and the one volume called *Last Literary Portraits* (*Derniers Portraits littéraires*) in 1852. They were all re-edited in 1862–1864, as three volumes, and entitled *Literary Portraits* (*Portraits littéraires*). The progress of his interests, from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth, and from authors of the largest fame to subjects less eminent, is shown by the table

of contents. Volume one contains essays on Boileau, Corneille, La Fontaine, Racine, J.-B. Rousseau, Le Brun, Mathurin Régnier, André de Chénier, Georges Farcy, Diderot, Prévost, Bayle, and La Bruyère among the dead, and Ampère and Charles Nodier among his contemporaries. Volume two contains essays on Molière, Delille, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, General La Fayette, Fontanes, Joubert, Joseph de Maistre, Gabriel Naudé, Aloïsius Bertrand, and the Count de Ségur. In volume three he treats of Theocritus, Francis the First, the Chevalier de Méré, Mademoiselle Aïssé, Madame de Krüdner, Madame de Staal-Delaunay, and Benjamin Constant. A number of articles on literary women, Mesdames de Sévigné, de Souza, de Duras, de Staël, Roland, Guizot, de La Fayette, de Longueville, des Houlières, de Krüdner, de Charrière, de Rémusat, one on the Duke de La Rochefoucauld, and the stories *Christel* and *Madame de Pontivy*, were published in 1844, with the title *Portraits of Women* (*Portraits de Femmes*). The *Contemporary Portraits* (*Portraits contemporains*), in three volumes, were published in 1846. The earlier volumes of these collections contain some articles that had first appeared in the *Globe*. Most of the other essays were from the *Revue de Paris* and especially from the *Revue des*

Deux Mondes. After many changes in contents and arrangement, all these books came to be printed finally as *Contemporary Portraits*, five volumes; *Literary Portraits*, three volumes; and *Portraits of Women*, one volume.

The *Contemporary Portraits* have probably less definitive value than the articles on dead authors, but they are far more interesting as a record of Sainte-Beuve's career and the exercise of his gift of prosecuting "intestinal criticism" while his patient is chloroformed with "exterior praise". Among his subjects here are Chateaubriand, Béranger, Sénancour, Lamennais, Lamartine, Hugo, Vigny, Musset, Balzac, Villemain, Madame Desbordes-Valmore, Xavier de Maistre, Eugène Sue, Scribe, Molé, Mérimée, Thiers, Vinet, Nisard, Daunou, Delavigne, Leopardi, and, by way of balance, Homer, Apollonius of Rhodes, and Meleager. One must not expect to find in this series the magisterial spirit which, however urbane was his tone, pervades the *Causeries du Lundi* and the *Nouveaux Lundis*, written in the consciousness of acknowledged power. Portraits of his contemporaries, who had been his consorts, older in many cases and at that time more celebrated than himself, richer, more powerful in politics and social life—these were extremely difficult to draw without either giving

mortal offence or spoiling the likeness. No other part of his achievement is so creditable, because no other task was so full of temptation and demanded so much skill and so much sacrifice. Of *Port-Royal*, the first volume had appeared in 1840 and the second in 1842. The work was ill regarded at Rome, and was put on the Index in 1845. The third volume was published in 1848.

Even before the opening of that eventful year, the tension between those who were faint-heartedly upholding the double-faced government of Louis Philippe, on the one hand, and its two classes of adversaries, on the other, was beginning to affect Sainte-Beuve's life. He had thrown in his lot temporarily with the legitimist group, who were associated politically with the republicans only by a common disgust for the Orleanist makeshift. Most of his colleagues in journalism and literature were occupying the more equivocal but more influential position of liberals in control of a toppling monarchy. They were the men of the hour. He was no longer near the centre of public thought. While he was trifling with the self-deceived dreamers around Chateaubriand's arm-chair, flattering them by denouncing Lamennais and betraying the confidence of George Sand, preparations for a great change

were being made elsewhere. If he had not profited by the revolution of 1830, brought about by his friends with his knowledge and assistance, what had he to hope from the revolution of 1848? When the events of February had taken place, he soon began to feel ill at ease in Paris. Even before the outbreaks, the reading public had been turned from literature to politics, and his earnings from the reviews had fallen off; now matters were worse and worse. In days of great excitement and urgent need of wisdom, he, the sage, was left to one side. Other poets and essayists were listened to by thrilled multitudes. To the author of *Port-Royal*, going home through a back street with a manuscript chapter of his unexciting work which he had been reading to the Oliviers, it was humiliating to encounter Lamartine, flushed with the triumph of having held a mob in check.

In March, 1848, an incident occurred of which he made use to attract attention to himself. Among the documents of the fallen government, a paper was discovered on which were recorded several sums paid to various persons in irregular ways or for purposes which had not been openly avowed. Sainte-Beuve's name was there, opposite the entry of a payment of one hundred francs. A friend in a

government office called his attention to this, and alarmed him by insisting that his enemies would declare that it was a record of corruption-money paid to him. He was extremely agitated, more than was at all necessary, for he knew he was innocent, and soon was able to explain that the money was paid for repairing a chimney in his lodgings at the Institute. Meanwhile, he protested in three newspapers that he was the object of an attack. The charge had only been feared, not really made by anybody. But he kept the matter under discussion as long as possible, and was accustomed for many years to attribute to this occurrence his leaving France in 1848. There must have been some other reason. We may find it in his need of money, or in his disappointment at the small rôle he found himself playing in the revolution, or in his desire once more to see French affairs from without and judge them at a safe distance. Any of these reasons would appear less improbable than that he was moved by his susceptibility as an honest man to run away from the mere breath of calumny. He had not enjoyed his post at the library. He said he felt as if he were in a cage for birds to peck at, like a bunch of grapes, or exposed like Andromeda on the rock. The salary was only four thousand francs a

year. To be sure, he was on duty only one day in four.

Whatever his real reason, he resigned his position on the pretext mentioned above, and we find him, on July 27, writing to a friend in London: "Would there be any way for a French man of letters, in my situation, to find in England, at the University of London or at Oxford or Edinburgh, enough to live decently by teaching French literature, in French? . . . I read English, but cannot speak it." He thought of America also, and a cordial letter from George Ticknor to a friend of Sainte-Beuve's who had broached the subject says that he would receive a warm welcome if he went there. "But for my mother," wrote Sainte-Beuve on the margin of this letter, "I should have gone." So it seems that not only Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey, but also their French admirer, entertained the project of emigrating to the United States. Long before, in 1831, Sainte-Beuve had been offered a professorship in Belgium and had accepted it. The political sky in France had cleared suddenly, and three months later he declined the call. Now there was a more profound change in the government, and he was more widely removed from the men in power. Furthermore, this prom-

ised to be a long season of foul weather. Storm was preparing to succeed storm; he felt it in his bones. And so, when on September 7, 1848, he was appointed to a professorship of French literature at the University of Liège, he accepted immediately.

On October 30 he gave his opening lecture. He offered two courses, one, for students, being a survey of French literature from Villehardouin to Buffon, the other, open to the public, being announced as a detailed study of the literary history of France in the nineteenth century. His audiences for the public course were large, at least in the beginning. He found it necessary to address more than two thousand persons in a vast hall, though neither his voice nor his manner nor his style of writing was adapted to oratory on a grand scale. The Belgian government, the faculty of the university, and the people of Liège gave him a cordial welcome, but he was annoyed from the beginning by a private enemy, who fomented opposition through the *Revue de Belgique*. This enemy was Michiels, a young man of letters in Paris, whom he had befriended. Michiels, who was mentally unbalanced and very ambitious, built theories of criticism which were too systematic for Sainte-Beuve, and when the latter found it impossible or

undesirable to secure a publisher for these eccentric works, Michiels imagined himself persecuted and became a thorn in Sainte-Beuve's path. The new professor declared that he encountered difficulties of more than one kind in Belgium: "Incredible pamphlets were published against me in Brussels and Liège. I was well treated by the Belgian youth, who, not knowing much about me, chose to wait and judge me only by my words and actions. I succeeded in spite of the obstacles."

In preparing for his private course, he availed himself of his tranquillity—he occupied a house almost in the country, and appears to have formed no social connections—to read copiously and capriciously, to browse, as he had never had time to do in his life as a journalist. "I am here," he wrote to Pavie the next spring, "in the real country. Every morning from my pillow I see the sun rise, and my eye wanders far through the valleys and over an immense orchard. I am seeing April in the fields, for the first time in my life. You will say I have waited long to discover Spring." For a poet it was indeed too long. His public course resolved itself into twenty-one lectures, almost all on Chateaubriand, an extremely close, relentless grapple with this one giant. Here was his "revenge" for the years of "hu-

miliation". He felt as if separated from his recent life by the lapse of a generation. The disorders in France, which he described in a letter to Collombet as an "immense and prolonged nightmare", made it seem likely that he would never return to Paris. He therefore threw aside all restraint and freed his mind. "If you heard me," he wrote to a friend in the National Library in Paris, "you would find me very bold and very frank. I am saying *all* I think about the personages of 1800 and notably Chateaubriand. . . . In Paris, with the Abbaye aux Bois in the background, it would be impossible for me to use this liberty, which, I repeat, is here absolute, on my part." He was no longer a reporter, responsible to the editor of a magazine and ultimately also to the persons who furnished him material; he was a judge.

And it was at Liège, therefore, that he entered upon a new manner. In the preface to the two volumes published in 1861, in which he printed his lectures almost without change, the volumes entitled *Chateaubriand and his Literary Group under the Empire*, he declares:

"Released from every rôle and almost from every bond, having observed at short range literary affairs and personages for about twenty-five years, and without any selfish reason for seeing them other than they are,

I may say that I am choking with truths. And I shall tell some of them at least. This is the only satisfaction a serious writer can have in the latter half of his life. . . . The course of lectures I reproduce in this book will not seem to be in accord with my customary manner, which heretofore has been that of a painter, rather than that of a judge. This time I have tried to produce only judgment-criticism."

And verily the crack of doom has been robbed of its terrors for Chateaubriand. His record was read before he had been in his grave a twelvemonth, and it is almost with a feeling of vexation that the sentimental traveller regards that island-tomb facing seaward at Saint-Malo, and thinks how the truth-telling critic robbed it of half its romance.

Early in 1849 Sainte-Beuve made one or two journeys to Lyons, where Madame d'Arbouville, whose husband was in command of troops putting down an insurrection there, lay dying. All his melancholy had rolled back upon him. He was crushed by the labour of writing two lecture-courses in one year. He missed Paris, and was disappointed that Paris did not appear to miss him. He suffered because his faith had left him—his faith in divine providence and human virtue. The freedom which at first exhilarated him at Liège began to oppress him. He saw no pathway before him. He found it painful to be forever beginning

life anew. A huge invading shadow was creeping upon him from all sides. His letters to Collombet in 1849 are filled with a sort of nameless terror. The death of Madame d'Arbouville, in March, 1850, was to leave him without a comforter and almost without an ideal.

I suspect that envy, the most sombre and suicidal of all passions, had much to do with his going to Liège—envy of his colleagues who had made a happier choice in politics and were now playing a brilliant part in public affairs. He puts forward a lame explanation in a letter to Pavie, dated Liège, May 1, 1849: "I was not willing to remain a government servant in France, where everything except the ragamuffins has been brought low. I had to make a flank movement, in order to return to the point where I was when I perched in our little lodging-house, the only future to which I aspire. A man always returns to his origins." The episode of the one hundred francs was a pretext for leaving France with the honours of martyrdom, and a letter published for the first time in 1898 reveals that he made a similar pretext for leaving Liège a year later. It was written in August, 1849, to a minister of the Belgian government who had been instrumental in securing his appointment.

He states that he could not overlook the unfavourable, not to say insulting, manifestations of public opinion in Belgium. "I was late in discovering," he says, "that Belgium did not think she needed what I brought her." He complains of his isolation at Liège: "It has been painful, being what I am in a literary way (for even modesty has limits), to be reduced to that."

He returned to Paris; and on October 1, 1849, appeared the first of the *Causeries du Lundi*. That day he entered on the most fruitful stage of his career. The entangling past henceforth had less grip upon him. He could defy the rancour of disappointed enemies like Michiels, as he defied later the assaults of fanatics like Louis Veuillot and the impossible demands of systematisers like Barbey d'Aurevilly. With the death of his aged mother, in November, 1850, he was left even more alone, and unhampered, alas! by those ties which preserve a man from irresponsibility. He was henceforth master of the house, No. 11, Rue du Montparnasse, where he lived until he died. Some of the unscrupulous persons who have pursued his memory with horrid enmity have tried to make the world believe that he was lacking in tenderness for his mother; others, that she was a person incapable of appreciat-

ing him. There is abundant evidence to the contrary in both cases.

Sainte-Beuve's literary activity in the twelve years 1838–1849, apart from his labour in continuing *Port-Royal* and publishing his collected essays, may be described as a series of critical campaigns. Looking beneath the "exterior praise", we find that he judged, in those years, the several groups of men with whom he had once been connected. Of his early masters and associates in the days of the *Globe*, there remained, full of power and in the enjoyment of great consideration, Guizot, Cousin, and Villemain. They were eminent in public life. Higher education took its tone from them. For twenty-five years or more the ministry of public instruction was almost constantly in their hands or under their control. They guided the direction of studies. Villemain in criticism and æsthetics, Cousin in philosophy, Guizot in history, all three in politics wherever questions of public worship or instruction emerged, were the regents of that age. Sainte-Beuve preserved some respect for Guizot and Villemain, though he often expressed impatience with their theories and no doubt envied them their dignities. Towards Cousin he was more severe, especially after the philosopher began to write about the

famous women of the seventeenth century, thus entering into competition with him. Descartes, he said, in one of his letters to the *Revue Suisse*, established a regular and organic philosophy which agreed with the religion of his time. Cousin had taken up and considered this philosophy, endeavouring to establish it in equilibrium with the dominant religious views of his age. But between the first and the second Cartesianism, between Descartes and the eclectics, there lay the eighteenth century, that is to say, an epoch of aggressive and subversive philosophy. He declared, therefore, that a fundamental incertitude underlay the apparent security of Cousin's method, and he almost went so far as to accuse the philosopher of insincerity. Cousin's philosophy, he maintained, could not really march in step with religion. Of the two consort vessels, sailing, to all appearances, so faithfully side by side, Catholicism was bound to lose the best part of its crew by their secretly slipping over to philosophy. It is, however, a proof of Sainte-Beuve's impartiality that even in his anonymous contributions he praised these three men whom he personally disliked. And in a letter to Madame Olivier, in 1845, he was generous enough to declare that Villemain was the finest and grandest literary mind in France, though the

phrase is startlingly unlike what he generally said of him.

About his former friends, the Romanticists, he wrote less respectfully. He waged consistent war upon their fame, which seemed to him out of all proportion to their merits. In 1845, writing to Collombet about contemporary poets and naming Hugo, Lamartine, and Vigny, he remarked: "We have come to the third boiling of the coffee"; and again, "There is surely something Epicurean at the bottom of all these great lyrical movements and this apparatus of sentiment." In one of his lectures at Liège he asked: "For some years past, what have the great writers, the poets, the celebrated novelists of France been doing? They have undertaken to write henceforth only for a class more numerous than enlightened. . . . Quantity, rather than quality, has been their motto." And to any one who will take the trouble to survey the publications of Hugo and Balzac and in general the popular writers from 1840 to 1850, and compare them with their earlier works, the condemnation will perhaps not seem too severe. Of Hugo, whom he refrained from criticising publicly, he wrote to the *Revue Suisse* in unsparing terms, for the want of reality and significance in his plays of that period. His judgments of Musset

were less well-founded. If there was a real poet in France between 1800 and 1850, a poet irresistibly moved to sing, it was certainly Musset. This is true quite apart from the quantity or the variety or the intellectual and moral importance of his works. When we read him, we share his passion and feel the intoxication of his beauty. His verse, by its carelessness, or at least by its ease and speed, creates a sense of his being driven by an impulse beyond his control. No other French poet of his generation gives quite this impression. If his poems betrayed more solicitude about form, if they were more regular, if he gave us time to think about his rhymes, the spell would be broken. A foreigner trying to read French poetry is tempted to scan the lines. He misses the frequent alternations of heavy and light stress to which his ear is accustomed, and tries to produce them where they should not be. But in reading Musset we forget to do this, because so many other elements enter into his charm. Sainte-Beuve, I think therefore, was mistaken in demanding greater regularity of versification, as he does in the following passage:

"The true originality of Musset consists in having re-introduced thought into poetry by means of passion; his grave mistake is in having relaxed and almost dis-

solved the form. Never since men have been making French verse has a poet rhymed so little. To find similar instances we should have to go back to the versifying chroniclers of the thirteenth century. He thinks he is making the meaning plainer, but he is mistaken. The meaning itself suffers from this freedom. Many a time in reading Musset I perceive what he means, but he does not say it."

An English critic would scarcely blame a poet for suggesting his images rather than stating them precisely. The most mysterious effects of German poetry are produced in this way. And recent French poets have attempted, perhaps too deliberately, however, to work by suggestion. None of Sainte-Beuve's errors in judging his contemporaries is so remarkable as his failure to value Musset's poetry at its true worth. It is a spontaneous *effusion* of feeling; perhaps not otherwise great poetry, but certainly in so far distinguished from nearly all other French verse. The critic is happier in his thrust at Gautier, whose fragile and exquisite emptiness he well characterises when he says that his verse "will have some success among those who are satisfied with the grace of fancy and the vivacity of colour. . . . What a pity that it is all spoiled by an almost continuous affectation, and that simple, true feeling is wanting under these varnishes which are often so charming!"

Sainte-Beuve deserted Lamennais in his hour of need. He deserted him for the company of men whose opinions were opposed to his own. But these men were powerful, and Lamennais was an outcast. He seldom, during and after his connection with the Abbaye aux Bois, wrote a line about Lamennais which is not a shadow on his own memory. His brief access of snobbishness had made him cruel. "Lamennais," he says lightly, "a man long since ruined!" He grows sarcastic and speaks laughingly of "Béranger, Lamennais, Sand, and Sue, the four great socialistic and philanthropic powers of our age". Like most other men who have had the making of French literary history in recent times, he was scarcely just to Dumas, whose triviality and negligence prevented the acknowledgment due to his vivacity, humour, and marvellous gift of making the past appear to live again. In spite of the famous quarrel over *Port-Royal*, Sainte-Beuve was not unable to judge Balzac dispassionately. But as might be supposed from the nature of his tastes, he judged him in the main severely. Sometimes he wrote what other people feel, but have not the ability, nor perhaps the independence, to express. For example, he exclaims, in a letter to Pavie: "There is a novel by Balzac, *The Wild Ass's Skin* (*Peau de Chagrin*), fetid and

putrid, intelligent, rotten, luminous, done up in curl-papers, and marvellous for the way he seizes the tiniest points and makes them sparkle, the way he strings imperceptible pearls and makes them ring with the tinkle of atoms." This would serve for many of Balzac's artificial, pretentious "philosophical" novels, and Sainte-Beuve did not hesitate to write about them for the public as plainly as he wrote to Pavie. But he failed to appreciate the immense talent and the genuine love of truth in the smaller but still very considerable number of Balzac's realistic novels, such as *César Birotteau*, *Le Père Goriot*, and *Eugénie Grandet*. He could see nothing in Balzac but a great love of gold and an excessive literary vanity.

The critic laid formal siege to the renown of Chateaubriand. He began with respectful reconnaissances and slow approaches. He made himself at home in the citadel, and learned all its weakness. Finally, he carried the place by assault. In the flush of victory he destroyed its walls and trampled on its temples. The annihilation of Chateaubriand's influence must be regarded as one of Sainte-Beuve's most certain triumphs. In general, he established more reputations than he destroyed. Many a name in French literature owes to him

the fact that it survives and is clothed with interesting associations. Yet if no name in the history of nineteenth century literature has fallen so low as Chateaubriand's in comparison with its former height, the chief external agent in this change was certainly Sainte-Beuve. Was he moved by envy, by principle, or by an instinct of antipathy? Scarcely by envy, for of all the eminent men who overshadowed his lyrical growth Chateaubriand was furthest removed in age, although it may be said that René was a close precursor of the unfortunate and obscure Joseph Delorme. It may well be that Sainte-Beuve felt obliged by principle to expose the scepticism, vanity, and hypocrisy of the author of the *Spirit of Christianity* (*Génie du Christianisme*). His critical faculties were naturally excited by the infatuation of the public for a man of letters in whom the grace of a splendid style was supported by no firmer virtue than external decorum. But it seems as if an original, inherent animosity underlay both principle and prejudice. The bourgeois against the nobleman, the free-thinker against the leader of a reaction in favour of authority, the poet of common life, exercising minute observation, against the painter of broad romantic canvases, the exact, painstaking, truth-telling student against the

grandiose, inaccurate pretender—Sainte-Beuve was the opposite of Chateaubriand in many ways. "Chateaubriand," he once wrote, "makes his arrows of all woods, even the cedar of the tabernacle; he would not hesitate to make a blaze with the coals of the altar"; and in general it is a charge of sacrilege he brings against him. One may quite agree with the critic in all his judgments of the false great man, and yet feel shocked at his indecent haste to attack him as soon as death, a revolution, and a good two hundred miles lay between them. We are reminded of the revolting image in the *Journal* of the Goncourt brothers: "When I hear Sainte-Beuve, with his little phrases, touch a dead man, I think I see a swarm of ants invading a corpse: he cleans up a glory in ten minutes, and leaves the illustrious gentleman only a neat skeleton."

In his lectures at Liège he analysed the genius of Chateaubriand into three elements: reverie or *ennui* (the disease of René); a pagan and profane love of youth and joy, with a prolonged and ever renewed desire for a terrestrial Eve; and a preference for glory rather than virtue, for generosity rather than justice. Along these lines the critic makes his attack. This is the revolt of modern ethics against the knightly code of honour, the revolt of common

sense against chivalry. The instinct that prompted it was natural and sound; the analysis was made with cruel precision. Several articles in the *Causeries du Lundi* and the notes appended to his lectures when they were published in 1861 are absolutely relentless. Some of these notes, which are printed as letters to Sainte-Beuve or remarks made to him by "persons of his acquaintance", are probably his own more audacious thoughts in disguise. He was not above this trick. In one way or another he crippled Chateaubriand's authority: the paladin of honour was false to his wife; the champion of Christianity dared not examine his own faith; the famous voyager had been less than eight months in America, where he pretended to have lived with the Indians, explored Canada, and seen flamingoes beneath the dizzy cliffs that border the lower Mississippi, and bears intoxicated with grapes balancing themselves on the ends of boughs! Here are a few specimens of the blows he dealt the great idol of the legitimist and clerical party:

"Chateaubriand said to Lamennais, whom he saw after ten years of separation and when the priest had gone over to democracy, 'I think as you do; but what would you have? I cannot tear myself loose from this carrion.' He meant Legitimacy."

"There was only one subject on which Chateaubriand would not listen to reason and stopped Lamennais short;

it was when the latter opened his attack on the Catholic religion. Chateaubriand was not sure enough of his faith to allow the object of it to be discussed. 'I *will* believe,' was his only response."

"Chênedollé said, 'In René Chateaubriand has concealed poison in a religious idea—poison in a holy wafer.' "

Another campaign which Sainte-Beuve carried on between 1838 and 1849, but not openly, was directed against Catholicism, and more especially the Jesuits. His attack really touches Protestant orthodoxy also; for if Jesuitism be, as he declares, Catholicism in travelling costume, Protestant orthodoxy is Catholicism without a cravat. The medium of Sainte-Beuve's secret thoughts on these subjects was the *Revue Suisse*. France was agitated by a controversy over the question of public instruction, the Jesuits demanding separate schools and the leaders of the government standing firm for state control. The old Gallican party in the Church had been absorbed by the two extremes between which it once filled a large space. The ultramontane party, reinforced by its share of the former moderates and profiting by the last waves of the Catholic reaction, had put forward the Jesuits to fight for "free schools". Sainte-Beuve, ever alert for any dispute that touched education, but compromised by his relations with the Abbaye aux Bois, was reduced to the subterfuge of

anonymity. His expressions are very bitter. "Old peoples, like old people, are tempted to return to their paternosters," he sneered. "The essential fact about religion in France for a dozen years is the evident and complete abolition of Gallicanism; this great and truly French religion is no more." He predicts that the Jesuits will control the Church and plunge it into superstition. He declares that after the eighteenth century there can be no philosophy, however mild and methodical, which will not, at bottom and in its results, be found hostile to Catholicism.

The ten or twelve years that ended with his return from Liège were thus filled with a series of campaigns, more or less secret, against several groups of his contemporaries. Now that something is known of his real opinions, it is evident that during those years no very great change took place in his political and philosophical views. In 1849 he apparently cared less about political principles than ever before. His instincts apparently were liberal, though he had so long affected the society of extreme reactionaries. His self-respect as a citizen must have suffered as he looked back upon his tortuous course, in which no disinterested overt political action is discernible, and of which the result was isolation. He has

himself pointed out the course of his philosophical development in these years. Near the end of his life, he declared that an article on La Rochefoucauld which he published in 1840 was the turning-point of his intellectual career: it marked a date; his youth had accepted a positive philosophy in accord with his physiological and medical studies; a grave moral affection, sentimental and mystical, had supervened; the essay on La Rochefoucauld marked the end of that crisis, the return to healthier ideas, in which subsequent years of reflection had only strengthened him. The essay does not seem to me to justify such a view of its importance. At least it contains little that is new. It reads like a chapter which had been intended for *Port-Royal*. In his studies of Pascal Sainte-Beuve was already sounding, or had already sounded, the depths of metaphysical pessimism, had conceived a universe such as Calvin figured it, but without a Redeemer. Perhaps the essay on La Rochefoucauld marks the beginning of a phase of moral pessimism, a despair of human nature; but it is strange that this should be called a return to healthy ideas.

As regards literary ideals and methods, these years witnessed his final abandonment of romance. In them he at last resigned himself

to be a critic. He applied his analysis, between 1838 and 1849, not so much to the literature of previous ages, as to his contemporaries, and therefore made many errors, for the undertaking was extremely hazardous. He no longer merely analysed, explained, described; he sat in judgment. For a time he appears to have been about to form a method. If a man presumes to express literary judgments, he must make them, one would suppose, in conformity to some standard of excellence. Readers have been tempted, therefore, to search in *Port-Royal* and the essays of this period for the foundations of a system of æsthetics, for the origins and elements of a method. Brunetière, I believe, went so far as to say that the only thing of permanent value left by Sainte-Beuve was precisely his method. Then it should be easy to state what his method is. But who has ever been able to do that? Criticism in the form of biography, in the form of a moral and psychological study of authors, is as old as Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. Surely Brunetière must have meant that Sainte-Beuve left something besides the consecration of this practice, which he did not invent. But portraiture, endless portraiture, and an infinite play of intelligence—this, and no other vestige of "method" at all, is what can

be found in Sainte-Beuve. Even the practice of physical description—what he called physiological detail—was not new, although he brought it to perfection. Erasmus, in his portraits of Colet and More, had approached his subjects in the same way.

CHAPTER VII

THE CAUSERIES DU LUNDI

Balzac's political novels, with all their exaggeration, are true in one respect: they give some idea of the extent to which the French government under Louis Philippe was used in the interest of the money-lending class. Timorous in every other way, the "rotten race"—"*race pourrie*"—of Orléans and the ministry of Guizot defied the industrial labourers, the peasantry, the shopkeepers, the provincial nobility, and the clergy, at the dictation of a selfish and vulgar minority. This was the age of railroad-building, industrial expansion, and the introduction of machinery; and the small number who had the handling of available capital enriched themselves enormously. In order to secure their future, they took the government virtually into their own hands, using able statesmen and publicists, like Thiers, Guizot, Villemain, and Cousin, as their unconscious agents. When the ministry of Guizot, in 1847, increased the repressive measures by which this unpopular government was maintained, the various opposition parties momen-

tarily combined, the people of Paris rose, the national guard revolted, and the revolution of February, 1848, was accomplished. But it was soon evident that the Republic could not count on the support of all the elements which had made its existence possible. The provincial nobility, the clergy, and the large part of the peasantry whom they controlled between them were in favour of a Bourbon monarchy. Many conservative people besides these legitimists were afraid.

The excesses of the great Revolution and the fact that it had degenerated into the military despotism of Napoleon—its logical issue, as some men illogically supposed—still obscured its merits and its triumphs in the field of social relations. Louis Napoleon's manifest design of betraying his republican supporters was regarded with favour by many of the disappointed Orleanists of the year before and by timorous recruits from all parties. When from being President he became dictator, by the *coup d'état* of December 2, 1851, and soon thereafter Emperor, the peasantry were dazzled with the memories of military glory awakened by his name and with the hope of a brilliant foreign policy; but it was with expectations of quite the contrary sort that men with political experience followed him. They were

tired of strife. They believed that not one of the three old parties, legitimist, Orleanist, republican, would be able permanently to withstand the hostility of the other two. They argued that the rule of a Napoleon would be a military government, therefore a strong government, and consequently stable. "The Empire means Peace!" This was their excuse. It is the only apology that can be offered for Sainte-Beuve's adhesion. He thought, moreover, that he required a peaceful and as far as possible a splendid metropolis and court for the unfolding of his powers.

He returned to Paris in September, 1849, under the presidency of Prince Louis Napoleon, and agreed to contribute an article once a week for the Monday edition of the *Constitutionnel*, a newspaper of Bonapartist tendencies. This was a bold undertaking, for even if the critic's originality could remain equal to the demand, it was doubtful whether France, or the whole world, would provide a constant supply of books worthy of serious treatment and interesting to the public. Especially in view of the unsettled state of the country, there was ground for apprehending failure for so extended a plan. But Sainte-Beuve knew his own resources. He realised, too, that the intellectual life of France was vivid enough to

provide him with subjects, if he treated them broadly, attaching the present to the past and showing the relation between literature and every variety of human experience. This way of regarding literature had become more and more his habit of mind. The idea of belles-lettres was foreign to him. Literature seemed to him, not an art, but the common coinage of human thought and conduct. Surely this currency would never fail in a country like France. He was ready and eager. He had long desired, he declared, such an opportunity for being a critic, as he understood the term, with all the ripeness and boldness which age and experience had given him. He was stirred by the hope of stimulating others; and indeed the weekly appearance of his reviews was an assurance to authors that their works, if worthy, would be judged publicly and in a competent manner. After his first year, he wrote with exhilaration that he felt he was now launched on a third cruise. He was at last telling the truth about authors and their works, whereas in the eighteen years of Louis Philippe's reign he had contented himself generally with description, and in his first voyage, during the Restoration, his criticism had been polemical.

But before inquiring further into the nature of the *Causeries du Lundi*, which are Sainte-

Beuve's ripest and most characteristic achievement, it will be well to review the chief events of his life, his outward life at least, during the years from 1849 to 1861, which were spent in producing this great series of essays, or, as he termed them, "talks". No doubt they may be read with pleasure by one who knows nothing of their author or the circumstances that affected their origin. But a keener, even if more troubled delight, and vastly more profit, are his who reads them understandingly.

For nearly three years there is little trace in the *Causeries* themselves of any political tendency on his part. He wrote freely, and, considering the chances of a counter-revolution, I think he wrote boldly; for in France every topic leads to politics, and even so harmless a subject as the letters of Madame de Sévigné to her daughter, or so remote a subject as Firdousi, the tenth century Persian poet, was filled with dangerous possibilities. He wrote freely and boldly, yet with such absorption in every fresh case, such apparent absence of ulterior purpose, that he succeeded in interesting a large public in questions as remote as possible from the excitements of those three years. From the very beginning he was free—terrible in his blame and enthusiastic in his praise, no matter what might be the political

past of the authors whom he discussed or the possibility of their political power in the future. Within the first six months he had dealt savagely with Lamartine in two articles, had written very favourably of the literary works of Villemain and Cousin and of the *History of the Empire* by Thiers, had described with enthusiasm, almost with unction, the orations of Montalembert and the sermons of Lacordaire, had judged discriminatingly, with mingled praise and blame, Guizot's *History of the English Revolution*, had drawn a flattering portrait of Madame Récamier, and rubbed the bloom from Chateaubriand's *Memoirs*.

These persons were all among the vanquished. They were doctrinaires and legitimists and clericals who had formed what he once called the general staff of the salons before 1848; they had been the principal rallying-points of the fallen system. Yet some he exalted and others he debased. He did not confound them in one general denunciation. He judged them all, according to his taste and conviction, even if not in every instance according to their deserts. Where he erred, or seems to me to have erred, was in the ecstasy of his praise, the high terms of comparison which he exhausted in eulogy. He was certainly not ungenerous to the defeated. We know from the extracts

from his diary which have been printed in the volume called *The Note-books of Sainte-Beuve* (*Les Cahiers de Sainte-Beuve*) that in his efforts to conciliate them he really softened his resolution to "tell the truth about authors and their works". For these extracts, added to the notes for the *Revue Suisse* and certain letters, prove that he entertained from first to last a complete distrust of Cousin, many misgivings about Guizot, and generally no very high opinion of Villemain. He liked to see men play their game to the end, and able combatants who never flinched, Lacordaire and Montalembert for example, were sure to hold his favour.

But on August 23, 1852, his weekly Causerie was an article entitled *Regrets*, for which he has been severely condemned. By this time the usurpation of Louis Napoleon was complete. He had thrown aside the disguise of republicanism and declared himself Emperor. Most men with whom principle prevailed over expediency were shocked by this step, and refused to acquiesce. The leaders of the two former monarchies, legitimists and Orleanists, had stopped short, of course, in 1848. Now the convinced republicans, who had hoped to win something through Louis Napoleon, if not against him, in their turn stood still.

Sainte-Beuve managed to reconcile his desire for tranquillity with his Revolutionary instincts and origins. He has been charged with being a servile tool of power. But his craving for peace was perfectly reasonable. It was characteristic of him. It might even be termed patriotic. And he was logical enough, though no doubt mistaken, in holding that the Bonapartist tradition was the best practical vehicle of Revolutionary principles.

In the article in question he excused himself for departing from his habit of treating only literary matters, and expressed his opinion of the fallen statesmen who were hanging back. He pointed out a malady which was poisoning their minds and depriving the state of their assistance. This malady, he declares, "is irony, is spite, not so much regret for what has ceased to be, as the astonishment, the surprise, the rage, of those who have to look on at what is happening, and happening without their aid. They cannot get over the fact that they no longer govern the world. . . . I am not advising them to espouse the reigning power, but simply not to be stubborn and deny it." He analyses with mordant insight the causes of their silent opposition. "Naturally," he remarks, "it is always the last fallen power which is most irritated against the power that

succeeds it; the one that fell before the last is already accustomed to patience."

In other words, Guizot and those who had been his fellow-leaders under Louis Philippe were sulking over their defeat, whereas the brows of the legitimists were beginning to clear a little. The vanquished persist in imagining themselves the representatives of law and justice, of truth and social legitimacy. They scorn the representatives of fact. The fate they choose for themselves, deprived as they are of the habit of exercising power, is to shrivel in impotent rancour, to shrink into the littleness of irony, to devour themselves in sterile rage. And he justly praises men of taste and gentle breeding who dissemble gallantly the bitterness they must feel when they fall from power. "Of all dispositions of the soul, irony," he cries, "is the least intelligent. Of all passions, spite is the smallest; and from the beginning it has been perhaps the prevailing passion of the French." His own attitude he describes as follows: "I am grateful to any government which secures me order and the guarantees of civilisation and the free development of my faculties by work; I thank it, and am ready, in my humble way, to support it." This is not heroic, but it is honest, for in every political vicissitude it was his natural, his characteristic

position. He wrote in his private note-book, March, 1848: "I am at bottom a Girondin, a republican by instinct. My humour is popular, and in every political excitement the old leaven stirs in me. But—I am forty-four years old; my health, my nerves, are delicate; my literary tastes and social manners are refined; I have been sedentary for years, and my habits contradict my instincts."

In concluding the article, *Regrets*, he extends his remarks to the lovers of literature who profess to be alarmed by the encroachments of science. He shows here a truly liberal feeling. If the world, he says, is interested in science, this interest should be welcomed and used for the world's good, and literature must accommodate itself to the situation. He calls for "a new literature, more solid and more real in some respects, less clearly modelled on the old. In the hands of men of talent it will have its own originality." He appeals—and here the son of the Revolution speaks the language of the Revolution—he appeals to the spirit of life in mankind, the spirit of accommodation to fact, the ever-living capacity for progress. "Let us not make it our selfish and professional interest that society should go wrong. . . . Unhappy the man who lives long in the hope that others will commit mis-

takes. He commits the greatest mistake himself, and is punished for it by the loss of intellectual rectitude and breadth."

This article, which provoked the resentment of his old associates and has been often cited as an instance of disloyalty, appears to me to be in every respect candid and on the whole consistent with his past. The real episode, the real aberration, the real inconsistency, was his period of subjection to the grace and interest of the Abbaye aux Bois between 1838 and 1848. When he accepted honours and, as his enemies pretended, rewards from the imperial government, they seized these occasions to reproach him with venality. It has recently been discovered that the Minister of Public Instruction offered him in September, 1852, the chair of French Eloquence at the Sorbonne, as successor to Villemain. He declined, on the ground that it would appear ungracious in him to step into the shoes of a man whom he had been attacking.

At the end of 1852 he passed from the *Constitutionnel*, which had changed hands, to the *Moniteur*, the official organ of the government, continuing his Monday essays as before.

In 1853 he was made an officer of the Legion of Honour, although in 1837 and 1844 he had declined membership in that order. In 1859

he was promoted to the rank of commander.

In 1854 the Minister of Public Instruction nominated him to a professorship of Latin Poetry at the Collège de France. He accepted this post, and on January 8, 1855, suspended his weekly Causeries to prepare a course of lectures on Virgil. He gave the first of these on March 9. The courses in the Collège de France are open to the public. Sainte-Beuve's first lecture and the one following were interrupted by a hostile group who took this occasion to protest against his political conduct. He was utterly wanting in the gallant imprudence which enables some men to keep up a losing fight against odds; and so the third lecture was never given. He made a point of proving his competence, however, by publishing the course, in 1857, under the title of a *Study of Virgil* (*Étude sur Virgile*). This little book is valuable as an attempt to give definite form and visage to Virgil himself, who, considering the popularity of his writings, is a very vague personality to most of his readers. Beyond this, it has no special worth. It can hardly be said to rise to the level of Virgil the poet, and shows that portrait-painting may, after all, stop short of criticism. In compensation for his failure at the Collège de France, he was appointed lecturer at the École Normale

in 1857. He filled this position serviceably until 1861.

He began to publish the *Causeries du Lundi* in book form in 1851, and brought them out, volume after volume, as fast as the material accumulated. In September, 1861, he went back to the *Constitutionnel*, and the series came to an end. He made a five years' engagement with this journal to contribute an article once a week for the Monday edition, and the series thus begun is known as the *Nouveaux Lundis*. They are similar in form to the *Causeries du Lundi*.

From the moment that he began the *Causeries du Lundi* until his death, Sainte-Beuve devoted himself exclusively to criticism. He shook off the bonds of society, and lived after a fashion of his own, directing all his energies to the completion of his weekly task. The house, No. 11, Rue du Montparnasse, which he inherited from his mother, became his workshop. He was inaccessible to all but chosen visitors and at all but designated hours. From Tuesday morning to Sunday night he was "a man grinding corn", as he wrote to Collombet. "I arrange all my subjects with M. Véron [owner of the *Constitutionnel*], who enters into my ideas, and so we have been going on from week to week. . . . It is a course

of literature in broken bits." On December 22, 1850, he wrote to Collombet: "I have set myself to work again like mad. It is, for the present, sheer necessity, for many reasons, and because it absorbs my mind, which otherwise would turn against itself." And in June, 1852, he wrote:

"My life is now as follows. I have retired into the little house where my mother used to live, from which I do not expect to remove till I am carried out feet first. I live here alone, or at least without tenants, and with a friend who is kind enough to keep house for me and spare me the domestic business. I do not go into society, and I leave the house only from necessity, to look for books—for fodder, as I say. My whole life is spent reading, then writing, then correcting proofs."

Willing friends in the public libraries collected books for him, which piled up on his table until he possessed the material for his article. His secretary copied the extracts he required—and he was always accustomed to print many and long quotations. He wrote or dictated a first draft, which he read to Véron or to some other adviser. Then came the second draft, the first proof, numerous additions, other proofs. It was a process of little touches, a slow adjustment of perspective, a gradual elevation and purification of style. Of the joy of free and rapid improvisation there was very little. The pleasure consisted rather

in discovering the truth and bringing it into line with some general idea. Whether it be called curiosity or conscientiousness, he was dominated by a desire to know the truth. His correspondence with librarians shows his anxiety to obtain exact knowledge, and three of his secretaries have testified to the intensity of his zeal in the pursuit of details. They have deemed it necessary, also, to inform the world about his daily habits; but information in regard to his intellectual processes is not so scanty that we need inquire how late he sat up or at what hours he had his meals. They were notable gossips, and have encumbered his memory with a mass of useless baggage. What is really remarkable about his mode of life was its intense concentration. He shut himself off from nature, from ordinary men, from the big commonplace world, and lived with books and a choice group of friends.

His associates, beyond his oddly assorted domestic circle, were chiefly librarians and bibliophiles and a few men and women of genius. His temper and health sometimes protested against the routine of his existence; and a certain narrowness of moral vision, due to the drying up of sympathies, is more and more perceptible in his later works. Yet there was safety in his determination to keep himself

intellectually fresh. He resisted the efforts of time to settle his opinions into fixed ideas. He plunged daily into the current of thought, forcing himself to see events in the light that shone for other men. He broke daily with his past. He kept free from petty engagements, that he might every day ally himself in mind with some new spiritual friend. He had spent the first half of his life seeking moral refreshment, moral renovation. This quest he had now, with profound sadness, relinquished; he had hardened in his mould. The heart could no longer be renewed. But intellectual rebirth was still possible with every dawn, and he guarded jealously this priceless secret. By what discipline, what gymnastics, he preserved the elasticity of his mind, it would be difficult to say. There must have been an inexhaustible fund of humility in him, a power of genuine self-effacement. Pride of opinion is the deposit that stiffens the joints of our minds. Sainte-Beuve had his full share of temper, malice, and envy, but he rubbed away their fatal rust with the unctuous grace of true humility. We shall better appreciate his self-knowledge and modesty if we recall for a moment the vast pretensions of many of his celebrated contemporaries. The contrast in this respect between him and Hugo or Balzac,

with their claims to prophetic power, their posing and bragging, is all in his favour. He refused to be driven, by the foolish demands of friend and foe alike or by treacherous ambitions, to set himself up as a seer. He renounced the advantages of enthusiasm.

"I shall never cease," he said, "to stand up for the rights of shrewd, moderate good sense, the rights of reason, which observes and selects and refuses to appear to believe more than it does believe; in a word, I shall never cease, in the presence of proud philosophies and of faith itself armed with talent—I shall never cease to maintain the rights, I will not say of the lukewarm, but of the neutral."

Considered in their entirety, the *Lundis* present an amazing spectacle of mental vigour and power of adaptation. They embrace studies of literary art and studies of human nature from Homer and Theocritus down to the latest volume of verse and the most refined question of morals. The discussions are free and personal. There are few conventional limits restraining and embarrassing the talker. He takes for granted a universal interest on the part of his auditors and a minimum of political and religious prejudices. His object is twofold. He is both professor and critic. As professor he sets himself the task of maintaining tradition and establishing taste; as critic he tries to discover the excellent in what is new. The

former undertaking was easier and more uniformly successful than the latter. Yet in the main, bearing in mind his own excellent maxim, "In all the arts it is less a question, at first, of doing better than others than of doing differently from them, provided this *differently* be not a pretence, but a gift of nature", he distinguished talent and encouraged novelty. His manner is personal. These are indeed talks, not formal essays. Their variety is, in large measure, due to this fact. The only thing fixed is their length, which is almost always the same, except where he continues for two or three weeks to treat one subject; yet so resourceful is he that there is no sense of monotony.

One who has criticised Sainte-Beuve in a few pages of excellent appreciation, M. Victor Giraud, says very truly that in art the essential thing is to be somebody, to have a manner, and to give the illusion of life. This is all the art of Sainte-Beuve. He appears before us in person. From the moment that he catches our attention by his art, it is only a question of the abundance and justness of what he has to say. His abundance is the more marvellous, but his justness is the more essential. His information, even though it surpassed that of Lessing or Goethe, Voltaire or Johnson, was

probably not acquired with more effort than his impartiality. To be impartial means to comprehend, and no exercise of the human spirit is so fatiguing, even to the strong, and so utterly impossible for the weak. Just as the arduous path of all social duty is pointed out in the maxim, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you", so in the field of intellect energetic self-surrender is the condition of knowledge.

Two classes of writers presented themselves to him: those who were consecrated by age and common regard, the elect; and those who came as petitioners for favour. The strain on his capacity as an artist was perhaps greater in treating the former class, for it was necessary to attract attention to them by freshness of style. The latter class demanded more power of sympathy, more originality of view, more vigour of conception, more strength of character, more generosity, more vigilant repression of his own prejudices. His taste in French literature previous to his own time was conservative, and his opinions of it were somewhat systematically arranged. There is never, in all his writings, so far as I remember, any scepticism as to the titles of Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine, Pascal, Bossuet, and Fénelon to the high places they occupy. These are fixed

stars in his sky. And indeed, the whole constellation of greater seventeenth century writers is his Ursa Major, the relations of one luminary to another being definitely settled and the quality of their splendour well assured. Molière, however, to whom, I suppose, a consensus of foreign opinion would assign a superior magnitude unshared by any of the others, he strangely avoids. This is significant. He attempts no profound study of Molière; he approaches Goethe almost solely on the side of social intercourse, through the letters to Bettina and the conversations with Eckermann; he makes the same exception for Shakespeare that most of us make for the great literatures of the East, as something which the shortness of life exempts us from including in our world of thought; he has little to say about Dante, and that little most inadequate; he manages to create for himself a sphere of philosophical activity in which we miss the luminous presence of Plato, and a train of dramatic tradition which can scarcely be said to reach back to Sophocles. These are serious omissions, for which no amount of interest in Chapelle and Bachaumont, Rivarol, Dangeau, and Mlle. de la Vallière can compensate. But with the exception of Molière, no French peak of genius was too high for his exploring foot.

It would have been instructive to see him, in the strength of his maturity, apply to the group of acknowledged great writers of the seventeenth century the process of comparison and the solvents of analysis by which he was accustomed to test their successors of the eighteenth, to see him, for example, firmly confronting French tragedy with English, and examining the capacity of French verse to produce pleasure by conformity to nature. Comparisons of this kind he did make, as between Latin literature and the French classics. He qualified himself also to write authoritatively of Greek literature, or at least of Homer and Theocritus. For some years, beginning about 1840, he employed a learned Greek, named Pantasides, to give him lessons, and the Greek poets became more and more a standard of excellence in his judgments, both artistic and moral. He writes with competence, of course, but not often nor with particular zest, of the French authors before Montaigne. The fact that his articles were intended for readers of a daily newspaper might account for this restraint, but it is evident also that his gift, being psychological and not linguistic, led him to epochs about which more could be definitely known, and which, being recent, are for us, practically, more complex in moral detail.

On the whole, his criticism of his most celebrated contemporaries tended to diminish their fame. Time has justified him in most cases. He was simply the advance courier of posterity, tasting, condemning, recommending a little in advance.

He freed himself more and more from the few pedantries which marred some of his earlier work. He made no parade of his vast learning. He did not display, but rather concealed, the processes of research, often very arduous and sometimes ingenious and original, by which he had reached his ends. To have made a discovery did not appear to him a matter for self-congratulation, unless the discovered fact had some general bearing. He preferred to think of himself as an enlightened amateur, rather than an erudite scholar.

"The erudite," he said, "or those calling themselves erudite, are fond of making their pages bristle with queer signs, such as *cfr.* They re-establish the bad spelling in the passages they quote, they write *sic* in parentheses after mistakes in proper names, they abstain carefully from ornament and from ideas, and never deign to cite modern writers who have ideas."

In ideas Sainte-Beuve abounds. As M. Faguet says, he had many more ideas than Voltaire. His was eminently the fullest mind, though perhaps not the most fertile and by no

uttered the final word on a literary subject, never expressed a comprehensive judgment:

> "The definitive, the stable, the settled, the solid, whatever touches the irrevocable in the order of thought, moved him little. He did not believe in all this. He did not laugh at it. Laughter was too frank for him and too emphatic. But he smiled. . . . The fact is that he was only a critic of pure description and indefatigable analysis, denying the principles not only of morality and government, but of æsthetics. . . . Sure of nothing and curious about everything, how can such a man be a critic, an intellectual judge of what constitutes the beauty or the ugliness of human works?"

In other words, Sainte-Beuve was not an Aristotle. But who, since Aristotle, has laid down the principles of æsthetics, laid them down, that is, to the satisfaction of mankind? A more comprehensive glance than Sainte-Beuve's there could scarcely be, in this late age. A higher point of view, a larger soul, a less compromising experience, we may indeed wish for him. But to have burdened himself with "principles of æsthetics" would have destroyed his peculiar usefulness. Would that there might come into this confused world a giant such as Barbey d'Aurevilly describes, with the biceps to hold firm the balances of æsthetic judgment! Some grand and simple soul, pure, free, and high, grave but radiant, joyous but elevated—such a judge may come

and settle the vexed questions to which neither Coleridge nor Hegel nor Ibsen nor Nietzsche nor Tolstoi has given a quieting answer.

Meanwhile, let us be grateful that Sainte-Beuve was precisely what Barbey d'Aurevilly charged him with being—sceptical, undulating, varied, and full of delicate degrees. The details of literature, he knew, were infinite, as life is infinite. No theory could embrace them all. It may be just to expect every man to have a religion, but not every man can be required to have a philosophy. The "rigour and vigour" of German speculation, to use Matthew Arnold's phrase, left him cold. The French passion for order was one of the few French qualities he did not possess in full measure. He did not sympathise with his own disciple, Taine, in the latter's endeavour to explain genius in terms of the *milieu*. Brunetière's insistence on the organic vitality of literary *genres* or species would have appeared to him pedantic and tiresome. The strain of English blood in his veins may account, in part, for his indifference to system in these matters and for his overmastering interest in character. For, after all, this was his supreme passion, an interest in character—call it curiosity, call it a gift for moral analysis, or what you will.

And so it is that the *Causeries du Lundi* are

chiefly portraits, and the range is extremely wide. Personages are introduced whose connection with literary art was only indirect, and even in some cases remote—generals, ambassadors, explorers, saints, bishops, preachers, politicians, kings and kings' mistresses, court ladies, women of fashion. For one epoch of French history he has thus reconstituted the past in a marvellous degree. It was his favourite period, the last years of Louis XIV's reign and the years following, down to about the middle of the eighteenth century. This was the period when French prose was most simple and flexible, when even the court beauties who could not spell wrote with perfect ease and taste, when the tradition of good style was most firmly established. He returns with evident delight to the great personages of this time, who in the midst of corruption, and sharing it, expressed their ideas delicately and precisely, in the purest French. He is less indulgent towards the notabilities of his own time. He made enemies right and left. He belonged to no school or party, and could therefore rely on no organised body of defenders.

The article on Guizot in the first volume of the *Causeries du Lundi* may be recommended as an illustration of his severity when he

deemed that the faults of a great and popular writer had exceeded the measure. It illustrates also his distrust for certain tendencies of the age and his characteristic dislike for systems that would distort nature. Guizot was a leader in that movement, once so strong in Germany and France, which produced "philosophical" histories, views of events from the superior position of men who knew the purposes of the Almighty and could interpret the past through an intuition of final causes. This treatment became actually dangerous when it encouraged men to predict the future. It was and is still a common fallacy of doctrinaire minds that the study of history is a sufficient preparation for political prophecy. "History repeats itself," we are still told, though examples of repetition are still wanting.

"Guizot's philosophy of history," says Sainte-Beuve, "is only an artificial and convenient method of arranging the past. He suppresses all the forces which have not produced their effect, but which might, nevertheless, have produced an effect. He arranges in splendid array, under complex names, all the forces he can collect. But all the lost causes which have not found their representative, or which have been vanquished, are declared impossible, impotent, and destined to defeat from the beginning. And yet how often they have come within a hair's-breadth of triumph. . . . We are here touching one of the essential reasons why the historian, even the great historian, is not necessarily a great politician or statesman."

Sainte-Beuve shows that the revolution of 1848 might easily have turned out otherwise than it did, and declares that in fifty years men will be asserting that it had to turn out as it did. It is thus that the doctrinaires of our time formulate historical experience into maxims, such as that revolutions must end in military dictatorships, that a people without religion cannot be governed, that law should never precede but only follow the moral growth of a people; all of which have been delightfully contradicted by the history of the present French Republic. We are all more or less fatalists in whatever surpasses our immediate control. It is not merely the Calvinist Guizot who has looked at events from too theological a point of view. In denouncing this error Sainte-Beuve was true to himself, for he had none of that presumptuous eagerness to get past the facts. In this sense he was a man of science, and men of science in his time found in him appreciation and cordial support.

The subordination of self which made the *Causeries du Lundi* so varied and vital is also the fundamental virtue of Sainte-Beuve's now fully matured style. His earlier works are marred in many places by obtrusive flights of rhetoric. In the *Lundis*, although such passages still occur, they are less frequent, and

finally almost disappear. The imagery, which never ceases, springs more naturally from the subject-matter. Fewer attempts are made to smother the reader's reason in a storm of words at the end of an article. The fault persists, but grows less. The style remains subtle and involved, but is now seldom confused. It has scarcely any habitual tricks and wrinkles. It is generally fresh, as fresh as Voltaire's and perhaps even less monotonous. To the end, however, Sainte-Beuve remained a diffuse writer, full of repetitions.

The years between 1849 and 1861 were the most fruitful period of his life. Yet they have less interest for biography than the periods of growth and combat which went before. He was in the plenitude of his powers. He was producing with the regularity of a machine. Except for the changes from one newspaper to another and the two professorial engagements, nothing interrupted him. He was not disturbed, during these twelve years, by any inward convulsion, by any of those profound spiritual shocks which accented his earlier career. He purposely kept his emotions in the service of his reason. He deliberately subordinated his personality to his work. Even though he no longer hesitated to exercise that function of criticism which consists in judging, and was

becoming ever more trenchant in his decisions, he still gave to exposition, to description, by far the most of his pages, and to enter into an author's meaning was still with him the first and sometimes the all-sufficient step. To enable his readers to take this step without distraction, he kept out of sight himself.

The poetical illusion had evaporated. The glamour of life had faded. And not even a quiet end of the day remained. The mirage which had lured him long in his journey through desert places, the vision of love and domestic happiness, of a peaceful country home at whose door the great winds of the world should knock only in the form of flattering zephyrs bearing praise—this mirage, which had sustained while it disquieted his earlier years, was now forever gone. He had no heart for poetry and no time for philosophy. He was living, intellectually, from hand to mouth, as a man is glad enough to live when there is much work to do and strength abounds.

The memory of Sainte-Beuve has had to defend itself against the systematising habit of his countrymen. His chief French disciple was Taine, who unconsciously proved, by his *History of English Literature*, to what absurd conclusions a system of criticism may lead even a very powerful mind; and efforts have been

made to trace the theories of the disciple back to the master. His most learned biographer, M. Michaut, has devoted hundreds of thoughtful pages to the determination of his "critical method". The persons who organised the centenary celebration at Boulogne in 1904 had the piquant idea of inviting the late M. Brunetière to pronounce a discourse, and naturally M. Brunetière, who dwelt in a region of ideas distinct, austere, and elevated, but at the same time often too abstract, insisted on the "critic" in Sainte-Beuve, as upon some ghostly substance that could be evoked and separated from the man. He very properly protested against the flood of anecdote and gossip which was about to be let loose, and which would be excused on the ground that Sainte-Beuve's own practice had set the example. His warning was not heeded; the other papers had already been prepared. But he went further, and declared that a history of Sainte-Beuve's private life would throw no light on the origins, formation, and character of his talent: "In whatever way Sainte-Beuve lived, what constitutes the interest, the importance, the historical and literary value of his work is that we can detach it from his life." In the thought of Brunetière, abstractions had a being of their own, a birth, growth, and decline,

idea procreating idea. To Sainte-Beuve, in the second half of his career, abstractions simply did not exist, except figuratively. He would have been the last person to speak of detaching any man's work from his life. The universe of intelligence originated and had its limits in the minds of men and women. Except figuratively, their minds could not be conceived of as existing apart from their bodies. When Brunetière further stated that "to outline the natural history of minds was the final object of Sainte-Beuve's criticism", he was deceived by his own logical instinct, by the intervening influence of Taine, and by certain expressions of Sainte-Beuve himself, sometimes metaphorical and always quite uncharacteristic. M. Michaut also, out of the amazing abundance of his knowledge, is able to conclude that the critic had a method, or an evolution of method, that he passed through the phase of descriptive into the phase of judicial criticism, and that he then began to classify men by their "dominant instincts", and finally to group them in "families of minds". He cannot rest satisfied with a Sainte-Beuve who takes an interest in every writer for his own or her own total and individual self. But it seems to me that the scientist in Sainte-Beuve went no further than analysis; he was not the Cuvier nor the Linnæus of liter-

ature. He insisted on leaving room in his own mind and in the minds of his author-subjects for what he called "a certain contrary", meaning that nothing is simple, and that even a "dominant instinct" does not exclude qualities which may rebel against classifying their possessor.

His procedure is indeed biographical. He analyses the temperaments and characters of authors as a means of appreciating their works. And to persons who objected that this was an unworthy way of approach he replied:

> "To understand a man, that is to say, something quite different from a pure spiritual essence, you cannot employ too many processes or take hold of your object by too many ends. So long as you have not asked a certain number of questions about an author and received the answers, you cannot be sure that you have grasped him wholly. What did he think in matters of religion? How was he affected by the spectacle of nature? How did he conduct himself towards women? What was his everyday manner of life? None of the answers to these questions is to be neglected, if you would judge the author of a book and the book itself."

But we must remember that all the knowledge he obtained, in these and other ways, was brought into service by his sovereign will, in what he called "an act of taste". An act of taste, he wrote, original and courageous, is rarer than an act of courage in the civil order.

To insist that Sainte-Beuve originated a

"method", in any philosophical or scientific sense, is to falsify his whole spirit. In a humbler sense, he of course employed methods or habitual modes of procedure. He thought it important to inquire into the ancestry of his men and women. He caught eagerly at physiological details. The effect of colour-blindness in a poet, the nature of Pascal's hallucinations, the deafness of Rousseau, the height and weight and comeliness of Bossuet, the complexion of Fénelon—these and such as these were, in his eyes, matters of consequence. He attached great value to an acquaintance with an author's first literary ventures and to the earliest editions of an author's books. Most of the *Causeries du Lundi* begin with biographical sketches, and include substantial extracts from the letters, speeches, or other works of their subjects. But they are as far removed from aimless chatter or anecdote-mongering as can be imagined. He never remains content with these inquiries. What he drives at, in every instance, is the greatness or distinction which the works and the person possess. If the works contain this quality, it will be found in their author. He does not even attempt, as a rule, to distinguish between genius and talent. He is ever on the alert for what is supreme in its kind; his respect for

greatness rarely fails; he never closes the lists or sets limits, and nothing could have been more contrary to his nature than to attempt seriously and systematically to arrange genius in groups. Be it said in his honour, he threw so wide a glance over the most complex and extensive of all the arts, that he realised the impossibility of reducing it to order. There never was and never will be a sound theory of literary criticism, because the field of literary criticism is infinite.

Portraiture still, the portraiture of authors, not so much as groups of minds but as individuals, was what he attempted in his mature years. "Inclined by nature and habit to study individuals," he wrote in 1864, "I am even more interested by the mental dispositions and the characters of authors than by the purpose of their works." And in the same volume, number nine of the *Nouveaux Lundis*, where this remark occurs, we find another, which even more fully unfolds his final view: "The idea has gradually come to me to cease restricting myself to what was once called the criticism of taste [that is, judgment-criticism, æsthetic criticism], and to penetrate deeper than has ever before been done in the direction of historical criticism."

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAST YEARS

As HE listened for the rumours of his time, for the advancing and retreating pace of ideas, for the voices of renown applauding this man or that, the author of the *Lundis* was able to distinguish his own name and rejoice in the extent of its influence; but swifter than all, and very close, he heard too the steps of Death. And at once he began to set his house in order. No man ever had a more present sense of posterity. He had seen too many examples of the care with which Time preserves the records of literary men not to be solicitous in view of the inevitable disclosure. He realised how inconsistent his career had been, and applied himself now to make the end explain and crown as much of the past as possible.

Thus at least might argue the *advocatus diaboli*, seeing Sainte-Beuve so astutely present himself for canonisation among the great and good. And since no one can accept Sainte-Beuve without reserve or wholly deny his claims, let us patiently hear the devil's advocate. It may be that he will express some of our own

misgivings, in the crude language permitted to his professional quality. "In early manhood," I fancy the indictment to run, "Sainte-Beuve was deceived in thinking himself a poet, a Christian, a winner of women's hearts, a sound moralist. His verse is excellent only as an illustration of critical theory. He was merely curious about Christianity and did not subject his conduct to its laws. His thinly veiled references to himself as a successful lover are probably baseless, and in any case ridiculous and contemptible. A moralist is to be judged by the height of his views, not by their multiplicity, and Sainte-Beuve's soul was placed low.* Panegyrics of his impartiality are for two reasons misleading. In the first place, he was not impartial. He undermined the reputations of his contemporaries, and his notebooks, printed after his death, prove that envy and love of scandal had an equal and very great share in this work. The extent of his malevolence towards Chateaubriand, Hugo, Vigny, Musset, Lamennais, Lamartine, Guizot, Ville-

* This remark is not imagined. It is expressed by D'Haussonville and Brunetière, and implied in Michaut, Giraud, Séché, and almost every other writer who has come close to the subject. It was the final judgment of Sainte-Beuve's devoted and noble-minded friend, Madame Juste Olivier, after the long exercise of patient indulgence.

main, Cousin, was in proportion to the fervour of his original attachment to them or to what they prized, and he was as extreme in his final blame of them as he had once been immoderate in his praise. In the second place, even if he had been impartial, he would not, on that account, be a great critic. Only a great man can be a great critic, and Sainte-Beuve was small. Doctor Johnson was not impartial, but he was a great man, and he spoke with authority. We are all perfectly conscious of the bias, the voluntary twist, in Carlyle, and we do not ask him to be impartial, for his weight is in his wayward personality. The prejudices of Ruskin, the dogmatising tendency of Arnold, are part of their worth, being plainly due to the intensity and integrity of their characters. Sainte-Beuve was eminent for knowledge, he was supreme in curiosity, his capacity for appreciation was considerable, though not unique; but he was not a grand and elevated personality, and therefore he lacked authority. He was not loyal to his friends. He had no principles. He passed from school to school at his convenience, whether in literature, philosophy, or politics, and ended in the paralysis of scepticism and the abjectness of subserviency to usurped power."

It is evident that the zealous advocate has

gone too far. Upon some of these points we have already reached more temperate decisions. Others, and particularly the question of his principles, are still to be considered. And it is by no means so certain, after all, that Sainte-Beuve lacked authority, whether its source were character, knowledge, or skill.*

No matter what one's attitude may be, whether admiring, unfavourable, or merely inquisitive, it is necessary, in forming one's opinion of Sainte-Beuve's personality and its relation to his literary judgments, to take into account that rather staggering book printed after his death, *The Note-books of Sainte-Beuve* (*Les Cahiers de Sainte-Beuve*). It contains fragments from his journal, other fragments from the same source having been printed during his lifetime in volume XI of the *Causeries du Lundi* and elsewhere. In comparison with these, the *Parisian Chronicles* of the *Revue Suisse* are pellets of sugar. Here we have Sainte-Beuve's poison-chest. He gives his opinions, ostensibly as he wrote them for himself alone, upon the

* On page 401 of *Causeries du Lundi*, vol. XI, will be found an *apologia pro vita sua*, the most concise of the many passages written towards the close of his life in which he endeavoured to forestall the unfavourable judgment of posterity. It shows astonishing self-knowledge and power of seeing himself as through hostile eyes.

men of his time, and these opinions are of the blackest. "Let us beware," he says, "let us beware of irony in judging. Of all dispositions of the mind, irony is the least intelligent." And we might add, in view of his note-books, that disillusion is the source of irony. Never relinquish, we might say, never relinquish a favourable view of any man or any subject until forced by facts, and if possible never give up an allegiance except for another, more reasonable and more fruitful. Sainte-Beuve in the *Note-books* shows special bitterness for his abandoned beliefs. "Leroux," he says, "has made me comprehend (what youth would never of itself suspect) that there is, for the convinced followers of systems, an evil hour when charlatanism glides in easily, and when, unless they watch themselves, they begin to be indifferent as to the choice of means."

"It often happens," he says again, "that the idea which triumphs among men is pure folly; but when once this folly has broken out, the good sense of men settles into it, organises it, renders it viable, and the mad dream becomes an institution that lasts for ages. I could cite more than one example—Christianity, and what we are seeing now"; meaning, I think, the revolution of 1848 and its exploitation by the Bonapartists.

What, meanwhile, has become of his friendship for the Oliviers? Were they included in the sweep of his misanthropy? His correspondence with them shows his personality in a more pleasing light than any other record we possess; but here too he might have said, with his favourite Wordsworth,

"We poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness."

While they remained in Lausanne the thought of them was home and peace to him. He contrasted the honourable simplicity of their lives with the corruption by which he was surrounded and which he thoroughly penetrated. He could appreciate the narrow but distinct poetic gift of Juste Olivier, and his high ideals; he had occasion more than once to feel the dignity of Madame Olivier, her firmness of character and strength of heart. At a distance and while they served him by means of the *Revue Suisse*, he treated them as his dearest friends, and down to the end of 1845 his letters to them show us a gentle, affectionate Sainte-Beuve, enthusiastic, effusive, unsparing of good advice. But the revolution at Lausanne in 1845 throwing Olivier out of employment, he and his family came to Paris and counted much on the faithful aid of their experienced

friend. It is said that they expostulated with him for his libertine life. What is certain, from the correspondence, is that he picked a quarrel with them in the hour of their dire distress, and met their gallant offers of reconciliation with a hard heart and cold words. He had excited their ambition and lured them to Paris. When he tired of having them on his hands, he let them drop. Owing to Juste Olivier's sweetness of disposition, a complete breach was avoided, and there occurred what the more outspoken wife termed the "distasteful resumption of a relation henceforth without confidence, without charm, and without illusion". In a will drawn in 1843, Sainte-Beuve had made Olivier his pecuniary and literary executor and, in case of Madame Sainte-Beuve's dying before her son, his heir. He bequeathed to him, in any case, his library. Under other influences a different will was drawn in 1855. There was a languishing correspondence with the Oliviers from 1846 till the last sad interchange of letters in July, 1869, but Sainte-Beuve had dragged anchor. He had drifted far from what he had been wont to call the safe harbour of their love.

In September, 1861, he began, in the *Constitutionnel*, the series of articles which have been collected under the title of *Nouveaux*

Lundis. The *Constitutionnel* allowed him more elbow-room than the *Moniteur*. It was anti-clerical; it favoured the liberal ambitions of the Emperor, and opposed the party of the Empress. His pen was much in demand for prefaces to editions of dead authors, but he prudently refused to compromise himself in this way with the living. He undertook also a revised and augmented edition of his *Contemporary Portraits*, adding many bold touches which widened the circle of his enemies. The most pressing occupation of his last years was the revision of *Port-Royal*. His letters from 1861 to 1869 are full of this subject. It was said by one who hated him that Sainte-Beuve would have scratched the ground with his finger-nails to gather materials for his weekly article. We may add that he would have pulverised the earth and evaporated the sea to learn the truth about Jansenism. He left almost none of the children of his brain to struggle undeveloped and unaided by his riper experience. And *Port-Royal*, which bore his fondest hopes of fame, was retouched with extreme care.

The younger generation acknowledged his power, and he kept himself fresh by living in as close intellectual contact with them as his necessities allowed, although his taste often

caused him to protest against their methods. For example, writing to Émile Zola in regard to one of his first novels, *Thérèse Raquin*, he exposes the faults, not only of that book, but of the whole school, as yet hardly born, to which Zola belonged:

> "Your work is remarkable, conscientious, and in certain ways it may be said to mark an epoch in the history of the modern novel. And yet, in my judgment, it oversteps the limits, it violates the conditions of art, from every point of view; and in reducing art to be nothing more than mere truth, it appears to me to go beyond the truth."

He attacks Zola's maxim that virtue and vice are mere products like sugar and vitriol; he detects the large share of the fanciful in his descriptions, however flat, ugly, commonplace, and narrow they may be; declares that, feeble as may be his own idealism, he wonders whether the pencil and the pen ought always to choose vulgar and displeasing subjects; and overleaping the false estimate of twenty or thirty years, he sees Zola's work, as it is now generally regarded, to be "a product of the head, and not after nature". This illustration must serve to represent the many similar pieces of sound advice by which he strove to direct the energies of younger men.

His fame was spreading beyond the boundaries of France. Matthew Arnold, whose

habit of mind and whose prose style owed much to French influence, and one of whose oft-repeated ideas was that British thought needed the reasonableness and amenity of a criticism akin to French criticism, was particularly indebted to Sainte-Beuve. He esteemed it a great honour to dine with the French critic in 1859 and listen to his conversation, which he said was "about the best to be heard in France". Two years later he wrote: "I value his praise, both in itself and because it carries one's name through the literary circles of Europe in a way that no English praise can carry it. But, apart from that, to any one but a glutton of praise the whole value of it lies in the mode in which it is administered; and this is administered by the first of living critics, and with a delicacy for which one would look in vain here."

It was probably through Sainte-Beuve that Arnold became acquainted with Renan's delightful speculations on the nature and influence of the Celtic spirit, to which he was indebted for the ideas and the very soul and temper of his own *Study of Celtic Literature*. It is interesting to observe how closely Arnold echoes in *Dover Beach* some lines which the unquiet French critic wrote in 1839 after observing the inland beaches at Aigues-Mortes:

"My soul is like these beaches, from which they say Saint Louis embarked; the sea and faith have long since, alas! withdrawn." And in *Le Dernier Vœu*, a poem in *Joseph Delorme*, which is printed with a motto from Sénancour's *Obermann*, the following lines perhaps suggested Arnold's *Consolation:*

> "O happy lovers, love, and snatch the joy
> Of passing hours. To many a lonely one,
> In tears and grief, this evening will seem long."

Few literary men of merit had not shown contempt for the government of Louis Napoleon. The usurping family were the more grateful on that account to Sainte-Beuve for his support. He was guilty of no base flattery, and refused to review the Emperor's *Life of Cæsar*. There was nothing in his behaviour to cast doubt on his assertion that he accepted the Empire as the heir of the Revolution. With the Emperor's cousins, the Princess Mathilde and the Prince Napoleon, he was on very intimate terms. The Princess, with more success than her ambitious and overreaching brother, maintained a corner for liberal ideas in the very court, and it is well known that the Emperor, especially for a few years when his personal prestige as promoter of the Crimean War and friend of Italian unity was at its

height, dreamed of popular and even revolutionary projects. He represented for a time, in the eyes of Europe, the policy of race nationality; Hungarian and Pole, Roumanian, Italian, and Schleswig-Holsteiner looked to him for liberty. Sainte-Beuve could for a while reply to those who scorned him as a time-server that he was really serving the friend of the Revolution.

He was used, and much used, by the government. One need only study the subjects and tone of the *Causeries du Lundi* and *Nouveaux Lundis*, not to mention their reticences, to be convinced of that. On April 28, 1865, the Emperor made him a Senator. He was henceforth beyond the reach of want, beyond the pecuniary necessity of writing. This was in his eyes the most solid advantage attached to his new dignity, for he did not deceive himself as to the social anomaly he presented among the men of distinguished birth and large fortunes with whom the Senate was filled—he, the bourgeois and journalist. He was amused, rather than oppressed, by the contrast.

Almost at once a remarkable change came over him. He threw himself into the opposition. In fact, on some questions he was the opposition. In judging this step, we have, as is nearly always the case when we try to

understand his conduct, a choice of several motives. It may be that he had been waiting until he reached a position of security before venturing to take up his natural and congenial rôle. Or it may be that this was part of his general preparation for death and transfiguration, for about this time the painful malady which was to end his life in a few years gave him a warning. Or it may be that he was really alarmed by the sinister change that had recently come over the imperial government. The ultramontane party, headed by the Empress, was triumphing. The Emperor, abandoning his previous courses, was holding Rome for the Pope against Garibaldi, coquetting with Bismarck, and invading Mexico. French diplomacy was being conducted in the dark, with no settled object. The internal administration had lost coherence. There was a perceptible movement of disquiet among thoughtful men. It shows itself in Sainte-Beuve's letters. He allied himself with other elements of protest in government circles, especially with the Prince Napoleon and the friends of the Princess, declaring that he belonged to the Left of the Empire. His sudden access of political courage, in opposition to the official programme, is, at all events, not difficult to explain. He had nothing to lose, except the

friendship of the Princess in case he went too far. His past career, in all that concerned the allied subjects of politics and religion—and in France they are always allied—was by no means consistent. The origins, the formative period, the fine moments, and the secret undercurrents were, however, liberal and anticlerical. By making his last years conform to this strain, rather than to the other which had often alternated with it, he might after all present to posterity something like an appearance of inner harmony or development. And finally, his intelligence, his patriotism, and every fibre of the honest man in him were bound to make him shrink from the gulf of corruption, the abyss of stupidity, into which the Empire was tumbling.

From the moment he entered upon this final phase, Sainte-Beuve appears, in spite of his physical sufferings, to have enjoyed the spiritual assurance, the sense of equilibrium, which he had hitherto sought in vain. The last four years of his life were probably his happiest. The problems that had vexed him were by this time solved, or resolutely given up. He tasted the joy of manly combat. With a glad surprise he found his brain clear of the cobwebs that had so long dimmed his interior satisfaction, though they had never greatly

troubled his outlook. He no longer hedged and compromised. He acknowledged his hatreds. And he made a good fight. Of course there have been many voices crying that this was the most false and perverse period of his life. But viewed in relation to his past, it was the only logical end, and much the most honourable that could be imagined.

And if we consider the matter in a larger way, is it not true that in thus accepting his negations and making the best of what was left he represented in epitome the final act of the great intellectual drama of the century? The protest raised by eighteenth century philosophy against the orthodox metaphysics and the whole system of politics and religion which that metaphysics consecrated was moral and passionate. It was the shrill outcry of revolted good sense, but had no solid logical basis and lacked historical confirmation. And so when the Revolution seemed to have failed morally or practically, the reaction which triumphed from 1815 to 1830 proved almost irresistible. It may be studied in France, in England, even in America, and its features will be found much the same. The surrender of the philosophy of their early manhood by Coleridge and Wordsworth, the discredit into which the names of Franklin, Jefferson, and

Paine fell in America, the sudden dimming of the German Aufklärung, the breathless march of the ultramontane principle in Catholic Europe, are scattered manifestations of the general discouragement. No other country was so distinctly the theatre of this action as France, and no single life represents its vicissitudes so completely as Sainte-Beuve's. A partial recovery of hope in 1830, but still of hope rather than conviction, led to the reforms of the next decade; but the principle of monarchy, allied to the principle of religious authority, gained the upper hand once more, and provoked a fresh rebuke in 1848. In these alternations Sainte-Beuve shared. He is a sure indicator of dominant ideas. He caught and condensed the main currents of enlightened public sentiment. But the Revolutionary principle, which had from the beginning, from Voltaire, Rousseau, and Hume, depended on a shallow or at least a subjective and therefore incommunicable basis of moral intuition, now was beginning to find support in arguments supplied by natural and experimental science. Most men, however, were not very accessible to such arguments. It was really the progress of historical studies that made assurance possible; and it was not until Sainte-Beuve became acquainted with their results that he entered

upon his last phase. He was most indebted to Renan, and through him to Strauss. Taine also, though in a sense his disciple, confirmed his tranquil abnegation. The German system-builders had never deeply affected Sainte-Beuve. There is scarcely a trace, in all his works, of Kant or Hegel. The conclusions of Comte might be ever so like his own, he refused to be captivated by Comte's philosophy, on the ground that it was too speculative. His life-long training in the psychology of literature, in the study of literary sources, made him sceptical as to the accuracy of history and the authority of tradition. He was ripe for the disclosures of historical criticism. They confirmed what had as yet been only his instinctive guesses or hopes or fears. The most potent intellectual influence since the rebirth of natural science has undoubtedly been comparative criticism, in language, literature, and history. And Sainte-Beuve was prepared to accept its conclusions with relief.

In March, 1867, one of the Senators, in a speech on public education, illustrated a tirade on the danger of atheism and materialism by referring to Renan, whose *Life of Jesus* had been published only a few years before. Sainte-Beuve sprang to his feet and defended, not only his friend, but the principle of free thought,

which he conceived had been violated by the orator. He was immediately attacked on all sides, and found himself in the unwonted situation of making, single-handed, a fierce extemporaneous defence. He was cried down, however, and his opponents were able to repeat, to their hearts' content, that religion was "the basis of social order". Next day, in explanation of his unparliamentary and certainly, so far as that assembly was concerned, unexampled action, he wrote a letter to the President of the Senate, which ended with the following passage:

"There are some subjects on which I shall never accustom myself to hold back my thoughts when I believe them to agree with truth and justice and also with the well-being of the Empire, which has no reason to incline all to one side, and which, being sprung from the Revolution, must not denounce any philosophy that is serious. We have lost much ground, Mr. President, compared with the Senate of the First Empire, which counted among its members La Place, La Grange, Sieyès, Volney, Cabanis, Tracy. Is it no longer permissible to hold the religion of those men?"

About three months later the Senate listened to a petition from certain inhabitants of the large industrial city of Saint-Étienne, protesting against the choice of a number of books for two free libraries under municipal control. It was proposed to exclude works of Rousseau,

Voltaire, Renan, Proudhon, Balzac, and George Sand, as being detrimental to religion, morality, and good government. Sainte-Beuve, in a set speech, denounced the petition. The incriminated work of Voltaire, his *Philosophical Dictionary*, had only the disadvantage, he said, of stating too loudly and too clearly what everybody thought. The *Confessions* of Rousseau was a courageous work, dear to the middle class and the people, whose habits, desires, dreams of happiness, and hope in God it had dared to represent for the first time. Proudhon, he knew, was dedicated to the infernal gods, but most unjustly, for statesmen and economists recognised his high merit; "and as for this name of socialism which excites so much blind animosity in prejudiced minds, I have," he said, "one simple remark to make. I have much read and meditated the writings of the prisoner of Ham,* and it has been impossible for me not to recognise in him an eminent socialist. To extract the good from socialism and take it out of the Revolutionary programme into the regular order of society has always seemed to me an essential and original part of the task of the Second Empire." Renan, he declared, was the most distinguished

* Louis Napoleon.

man of his generation, and was honoured with the Emperor's esteem. To protect the rights acquired by the Revolution, and its moral conquests, was an essential part of the task of the Empire.

As a result of this speech, which was received with much impatience by his colleagues, but with great enthusiasm by the press, by the youth of the schools, and by the various liberal parties, Sainte-Beuve was challenged to a duel by one of his fellow Senators. He lost no prestige when he declined to vindicate his cause on any but an intellectual plane. The country rang with his praise. He was overwhelmed with letters of congratulation. No one had expected to find in him the voice of radical France. He was the last person whom free thought would have chosen as its champion. But he had spoken, and the Senate had listened. He boasted of the gulf between him and the aristocrats who composed that body. "They live in their circle," he declared, "proud of themselves, frozen in their dignity, and counting for little a mere writer who came to them from outside." To a letter "from a liberal Catholic" he made the following vigorous reply, which marks, more than any other words could do, the position he held until his death. All the *Nouveaux Lundis*, the

final touches to *Port-Royal*, and his *Life of Proudhon* should be read in the light of this declaration. It undoubtedly indicates, not only the state of his mind at that time, but the tenor of his thought ever since his year of reflection, which he called "the crisis of second maturity", in Belgium.

"I comprehend quite well the social theory which declares that a people without religion is a people in decadence. But that is not the question. We have no choice. Whether we groan over it or not, faith has departed; whatever men may say, science has ruined faith; vigorous and sensible minds, nourished on history, armed with criticism, studious of the natural sciences, can no longer believe in the old stories and the old Bibles. At this juncture there is only one thing to do, if we would not languish and moulder in decadence: we must pass over quickly and march resolutely towards an order of reasonable, probable, connected ideas, which shall give convictions in place of beliefs, and which, while leaving full liberty and security to the remnants of faith that surround it, shall prepare a point of support for the future in all fresh and robust minds. Morality and justice are being slowly created on a new basis, not less solid than in the past—more solid, even, because it will contain none of the puerile fears of infancy."

A kind of joy, not due, surely, to the congratulations of collegians or the flattery of newspapers, but to a sense of being consistent, supported him through much pain of body at this time. "I have never felt so at ease in such matters," he wrote to Louis Viardot in Jan-

uary, 1868, "and more disposed to obey only my convictions without yielding to false social conventions." To the same correspondent he had already written, in April, 1867:

"The fatality of law is a consolation to him who reflects, as well as, and more than, a matter for sadness. Let us submit gravely. This mute and respectful gravity of a thinking man is, in its way, a religion, a homage rendered to the majesty of the universe. Our desires, ephemeral and contradictory as they are, prove nothing; they are clouds which encounter one another at the will of the wind; but the sidereal order stretches and reigns over all. You are, dear friend, of the religion of Democritus, of Aristotle, of Epicurus, of Lucretius, of Seneca, of Spinoza, of Buffon, of Diderot, of Goethe, of Humboldt. It is a pretty good company!"

In May, 1868, he read a long speech, to which scarcely anybody listened, on the liberty of the press. It had its effect on the public when printed in the official reports. He declared in this speech that he regarded himself as the representative of journalism and literature in the Senate and was determined to defend their interests. On the 19th of May, once more overcoming his distaste for public speaking and mastering his physical distress, he appeared in the Senate and delivered an oration on a similar subject. A petition had been received denouncing certain materialistic tendencies in the University, particularly in the

medical faculty, and demanding "liberty in higher education"—that is, liberty to establish Church schools in competition with the government system of public instruction. Sainte-Beuve spoke against this kind of liberty, declaring, in defence of the apparent inconsistency of his position, that the cause of real liberty would suffer if to the other enormous privileges of the Church were added the right to cripple secular education. He reminded the Senate that he had had the honour of being a pupil of the faculty of medicine, and that to it he owed the spirit of philosophy, the love of exactitude and of physiological reality, and whatever methodical excellence his writings contained. He declared that if the bishops in the Senate felt called upon to defend the faith of those under them, he likewise represented a diocese, which extended throughout France and the entire world, a growing diocese, comprising a great diversity of minds but all of them agreed on the necessity of being free from absolute authority, an immense, unlimited diocese, an intellectual and rational province of free thought. Making every allowance, he said, for counter-currents of reaction, for official claims, for a hypocritical show of submission, the tide of common sense was rising, irresistibly rising. He defined this

common sense as a progressive diminution of belief in the miraculous, the supernatural: a state of public opinion, with all its results, which was perfectly legal since 1789 and had a right to be acknowledged. In spite of interruptions by Cardinal Donnet and others, he attacked the theory that the necessary consequences of irreligion would be immorality. He assailed the eclectic philosophy of Cousin, a compromise between sensationalism and spiritism, a double-faced philosophy, bastard and amphibious, which had dominated the University for forty years. He gave a brilliant summary of the fiery trials through which the doctrine of non-interference between science and religion had come since the Middle Ages. He showed an intimate acquaintance with the methods and discoveries of such men as Cabanis, Dupuytren, Magendie, Claude Bernard, Bichat, Charcot, and Robin. He appealed, ungallantly, I think, and as a more loyal debater would scarcely have done, to his audience outside the Senate, threatening his colleagues with unpopularity. No such speech had ever before been made in that peculiarly artificial assembly, composed as it was of the tools of the government and the prelates of official religion. As he proceeded, he threw aside all restraint, and finally said that the

danger which threatened and disquieted France at that moment was not the progress of rationalism; it was the aggressive and invading attitude, the redoubled audacity, of the clerical party.

This address, which made Sainte-Beuve a black sheep in the Senate, was warmly acclaimed outside. The orator was waited upon by a delegation of medical students. He was obliged to spend much of his time answering the letters of congratulation which poured upon him from individuals and societies. He tasted the harsh savour of popularity, and felt, not without astonishment and perhaps amusement, the unwonted sensation of being, or professing to be, cock-sure. Sainte-Beuve a man of certitude! Sainte-Beuve a partisan! The sight was enough to make all except his familiars rub their eyes. And yet his attitude was historically consistent. He had once more done what it was his office to do: he had uttered the prevailing sentiment. For although he had appealed to the Emperor as "an eminent socialist" and attributed to him the most liberal intentions, the upshot of his discourse was no doubt as anti-imperial as it was anti-clerical; and in those three or four years before the war men of judgment in France were dropping away from the Empire as sailors desert an ill-omened ship.

For a few months Sainte-Beuve held with reference to the allied powers of Church and State a position like the one Voltaire maintained through many years. He struck at the Church first of all, and on many occasions. The greater part of his published correspondence dates from the period 1865–1869. It is full of confident expressions like the following:

"There are two categories of minds: those that believe in the supernatural, and those that do not admit its possibility."

"The Church and Science are two enemies; but when Science has manifestly triumphed on some point, the Church turns around, adjudges to herself the demonstrated point, sees no further difficulty in it, and reserves her oppositions and negations for a future discovery. And thus she proceeds in that long, astute retreat which she has been making for three hundred years before the march of Science and common sense."

As regards politics he felt less assurance. "The truth is," he wrote, "that I am a little less decided about politics than about philosophy. In politics I find it difficult not to act like the empirical doctors, who, when occasion requires, make absolute principles yield."

An awkward attempt to discredit him was made by the clerical press in the spring of 1868. He was charged with having held an orgy in his house on Good Friday for the purpose of shocking the friends of religion. The

rumour attained such proportions that the President of the Senate, urged by members of that body, asked him to defend himself. Incredible as it may appear now, the eating of meat on Good Friday was supposed to turn an ordinary dinner-party into an "orgy". There had been such a dinner. The guests were Taine, About, Renan, Flaubert, Robin, and the Prince Napoleon. The day had not been chosen on purpose to give offence, but to suit the convenience of the Prince, and although it was foreseen that scandal might arise, it was decided to let matters take their course, rather than postpone the reunion. Sainte-Beuve retorted the charge of his enemies by writing: "It is well that there should be counters to mark from time to time the withdrawal of routed religions. Our innocent Friday will be one of these little counters."

This man of *nuances* had now the curious fate of being white to one half of those who knew him and black to the other half. Both sides have directed our attention from his public addresses and have pointed to his domestic and civic behaviour. It is easy to pluck from his correspondence between 1861 and 1869 a sheaf of appeals which he made to persons in office in behalf of poor and unfortunate neighbours. And his letters to the

Princess are full of references to charitable works. On the other hand, the suspicion will intrude that he was draping himself for posterity, and there were scandals connected with his private life, even in these last solemn years, which have never been refuted.

One of his books, written with his final strength, was an action, and a good action. It recounted, with sympathy, the life of an unpopular man, a man in civic and private virtues his very opposite. The original publication was in the form of articles in the *Revue contemporaine*, in October, November, and December, 1865. These were not collected in one volume till 1872. This book, a large part of which, it should be observed, was written immediately after his nomination to the Senate, was a bold declaration of political principle. It was a *Life of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon*, the most formidable of French socialists, formidable not only on account of the inexorable demands and close-woven logic of his system, but because his character was heroic and his career martyrdom. He is perhaps the political figure in nineteenth century France most worthy to arouse enthusiasm. The integrity of his person, his humble origin, his long struggle against persecution, the vastness and withal the simplicity of his ideas, the startling accu-

racy of his prophecies, and finally the dignity of his domestic life, give to Proudhon's name something of antique worth. He stands out in honourable distinction against a general background which is too often composed of selfishness, inconsistency, and domestic and public corruption. Sainte-Beuve's *Life* of him was based chiefly on his correspondence, and is not primarily a study of his economic theories. This last great work of Sainte-Beuve is one more illustration of his "method". He declares:

> "My object in this study is not, as you may well believe, to plead for Proudhon, nor even to unfold and discuss very thoroughly his doctrines; I wish to perform an act of literature even in the heart of this great revolutionist, lying to-day in his grave, and I call it performing an act of literature to show the man as he was, to disengage his moral qualities, his real basis, his form of talent, his personality in short, which caused him to be respected and even loved by those who approached him."

Any one who has followed Sainte-Beuve thus far in his undulating course, deploring perhaps his want of confidence in humanity, his facile yielding, or appearance of yielding, to opinion authoritatively expressed, even when he knew it was wrong, will be surprised at this book, so full of joyous conviction, so abounding in something akin to hero-worship, so neglectful of caution, so studded with challenges to the average conventional man.

Commenting, for example, on Proudhon's famous treatise on Property, he declares calmly:

"I am one of those who think with Pascal that the title by which we possess is not a natural title, but a thing of human establishment, and that property such as we see it in our social state has no other basis than civil law and convention. What may be said is that it is dangerous to stir this foundation and that a thorough research tends only to shake and demolish the structure. But that is another question."

And he finds Proudhon on this point philosophically sound. We recognise one of the most profoundly intimate of Sainte-Beuve's observations—a remark he made at intervals, in one form or another, throughout his life, and often in heart-sick self-reproach—in the following tribute to Proudhon for the purity of his life:

"He maintained at all times the integrity of his moral being and the entire force of his intelligence. Incontinence, it has been remarked,* is a powerful solvent of faith, and inoculates scepticism more or less. That vague sadness which issues, some one has said, and breathes like an odour of death from the very heart of voluptuous pleasure, that enervating and discouraged lassitude, not only dims sentiment, but reacts upon the chain of ideas. The principle of certitude within us is in the long run infected and broken. The austerity of our beliefs is enfeebled. Proudhon was exempt from these weaknesses."

* By Sainte-Beuve himself, in more than one curiously introspective passage.

It was amazing enough to see a Senator of the Empire proclaim himself a socialist—for this is what Sainte-Beuve virtually did in his *Life of Proudhon;* but the access of courage that enabled him to reveal his secret purpose in writing or at least in revising *Port-Royal* was fairly startling. He had protested so often that *Port-Royal* was purely objective, purely historical; and yet in the preface to his *Proudhon* he says:

"I sent to him in Belgium my complete work on Port-Royal, as soon as I had finished it. He was one of the most competent judges I could wish to find for that picture of austere Christianity, into which I have endeavoured to introduce as many philosophical views as possible under the cover of history, distributing them in such a way that they are not disclosed in their connection except to one who knows how to look for them. Proudhon replied in a letter which is for me a precious testimonial and which I consider a title of honour."

Proudhon was very brave in his condemnation of corrupt literature. As a plain, unsophisticated, self-educated man, he was not deluded by the cry of "Art". If a book exercised, generally, a bad moral influence, it was a bad book. He had escaped the conventional training in literature. He was a son of the people. The celebrated novelists and poets of his generation filled him with disgust. We should be greatly edified if we

possessed *in extenso* the disputes he held with Sainte-Beuve on this subject, disputes to which the latter alludes with unconcealed respect for his frank antagonist.

In the last year of his life, Sainte-Beuve, having now completely thrown down the wall between criticism and biography, printed in the *Temps* three other lives, which have since been issued in book form. The subjects are Madame Desbordes-Valmore, General Jomini, and Talleyrand. In the *Jomini* and the *Talleyrand* he reveals, without illusion, some of the ugly features of the first Napoleon's career, in the field and in diplomacy. There can be no doubt that if he had lived till the fourth of September, 1870, he would have acclaimed the Republic.

Throughout his whole life there had been only one considerable restriction upon his complete independence, upon the free play of his mind. This, as he so often confessed, was the bondage of fleshly lusts. In every other respect he was his own master; and even taking into account this odious fetter, we may still regard him as the most detached and the most intelligent spirit since Goethe died. Risking the obvious retort that his slackness of moral fibre invalidates his authority in every sphere, I think we may see in him, as nearly

as it is permitted us to see in any single human being, the reflection of the course of nineteenth century thought upon a pure intelligence, not only in the field of literary art, and perhaps not especially in this field, but in that of religion and politics. We see in him and through him the recovery of the nineteenth century from the alarms and reactions that followed the deviation of the French Revolution.

He committed himself by an outward step, in passing over to an opposition paper, the *Temps*, at the close of 1868. Many of the articles now to be found in the last two volumes of *Nouveaux Lundis* appeared as late as 1869. His ardour for work was undiminished. He had fallen into no mental ruts, and he still permitted himself no indulgence in the way of idleness. His days were numbered, and he knew it, but, whether from habit, ambition, or conscience, he made them bring forth the accustomed fruit. There is no trace of exhaustion in his latest works, but only fresh vigour, stimulated by his conviction that at last he was moving all together, heart and mind, toward a distinct goal. As long as possible he kept in touch with certain friends who brought him news of literary Paris. He had for several years dined at the Restaurant Magny once a fortnight with a group including Renan, Ber-

thelot, Flaubert, Gautier, Robin, George Sand, Edmond Scherer, the Goncourt brothers, Paul de Saint-Victor, and Nefftzer, the editor of the *Temps*. Through this circle, chiefly, he maintained to the end his contact with the living world of thought.

His malady, which was proved by an autopsy to be stone of the bladder, was not correctly diagnosed by his physicians, and he died in great agony, October 13, 1869, after years of suffering. In accordance with his last will and testament, he was buried without a religious ceremony.

On the front wall of the house in which he died, No. 11, Rue du Montparnasse, Paris, there is a tablet to the poet and critic. Tablets have been affixed to his birthplace in Boulogne and to the old Academy building in Lausanne where he lectured. A marble bust of him may be seen in the town library of Boulogne, and another in the southwest corner of the Luxembourg Garden in Paris.

The twentieth century will take up with caution and no doubt with diminished enthusiasm, but also with control of vastly larger accumulations of material, the task begun by the eighteenth, the rational reorganisation of society. Perhaps the world can afford to rest a little in the feverish work of adding to the

sum of knowledge. That appears to have been the peculiar undertaking of the nineteenth, the century of industrial expansion, of science, of comparative philology, of historical criticism. It remains to estimate and use these acquisitions. What we desire, and that to which our efforts should consciously tend, is a more equitable social order, a religion in closer conformity with universal observation, a more fruitful system of training the young, quieter manners, a simpler mode of life. Sainte-Beuve was a critic in the largest sense because he judged his century and foretold the needs of ours. Living in the nineteenth century and sharing its vicissitudes, he reached back to the former age and forward to coming time. And in the exercise of this prophetic power he was more truly than in any other way the poet he aspired to be, for "poets alone have these instincts, like birds of passage which marvellously foretell the approach of the seasons".

If he bore the burden of his century; if he experienced its dangers and tasted its joys and temptations, its disappointments, too, and bitter disillusions; if he learned to know its character by living its life; if he burst its foolish bubbles by endeavouring to clasp them to his heart; if he helped to sober its reactionary impulses by condemning himself to scepti-

cism; if he led it back to paths of reason and moderate progress by giving up his morning walks in the garden of poetry and religious sentimentality; if he spared neither his dignity nor his ease, but followed his critical genius without reserve;—shall we not render him our grateful homage?

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